

**Sexual encounters:
Gay male college students' use of the Internet and social media**

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and all the friends that supported me through this journey to keep my eyes on the prize. First, to my loving and incredible family, thank you for your unconditional support and words of wisdom through this process. The many phone calls, text messages and encouraging words kept me grounded and moving forward. Second, to my casting crew and friends, going through this journey and production was so awesome, especially since each of you were on my cheerleading squad. Your energy, encouragement, and the many phone calls and late nights of much needed time away allowed me to stay focused and grounded during this journey.

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In conclusion, I hope to serve as an inspiration for my family and others who wish to move toward their own personal goals, dreams, and successes in life.

Family:

Linda Reddick-Thomas (mother)
Emmitt Thomas (father)
Ricardo Reddick (twin brother)
Wyetha Reddick (sister)
Tiffany Rodgers (sister)
Teresa Reddick (sister-in-law)
Termaine Langley (brother)
Oscar Green (father)

The next generation:

Jakeem Moore (nephew)
Emony Moore (niece)
Nykira Moore (niece)
Jaylan Reddick (nephew)
Joaquin Reddick (nephew)

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ABSTRACT

There have been many studies that focus on understanding various aspects of human sexuality and how it relates to college students. However, the current research focuses on heterosexual students, leaving a void in the research that focuses on gay male college students. Even more crucially, there is a void in research that focuses on the sexual risks gay male college students' face and how their actions impact their well-being.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore gay male college students' sexual behavior and its implications in higher education and gay male health practices. The Health Belief Model and Ecological Gay Identity Development model were used as guiding frameworks and foundations to explore the tricking encounters and culture experienced by gay male college students. The data from this study produced a total of four significant and frequently interwoven themes. The themes were as follows: tricking encounters and use of the Internet and social media, masculinity and body image issues, awareness of STD issues and personal safety, and adequacy of campus resources. In addition, conclusions, limitations, implications and recommendations for future research are presented in this study. This study contains adult content and graphic language.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to explore gay male college students' sexual behavior and its implications in higher education and gay male health practices. There have been many studies that focus on understanding various aspects of human sexuality and how they relate to college students. Heterosexual students are the focus of current research, leaving a void for research that focuses on gay male college students. Furthermore, research focusing on the sexual risks of gay male college students and how their actions impact their well-being is lacking. In addition, there needs to be discussion about the use of the Internet and social media by these students and their role in facilitating connections with others for the purpose of sexual contact, and the implications of their sexual risk behaviors. Please note that this study contains adult content and graphic language.

With the rise of the Internet, many students spend much of their time using the Internet to maintain contact with their friends, family, and to make connections with people that they do not know personally. Even more importantly, many college students, both straight and gay, may frequently use the Internet in pursuit of sexual contact. Websites, such as manhunt.com, gay.com, adam4adam.com, craigslist.com and others, have become popular among gay male college students. Such websites allow individuals to connect with others for sex or friendship conveniently and anonymously. Furthermore, research has shown that most college students view hooking up as the only available avenue for romantic relationships and sexual encounters, hence becoming the dominate socio-sexual scene on campus (Bogle, 2008).

It was commonplace for my peers frequently to talk about their sought interactions and the excitement of the next trick. The slang word trick is defined as “a casual, inconsequential sex partner” (Reuter, 2006, p. 213). It is my opinion that the hetero-normative version of tricking, is noted as:

Hooking up, which is not synonymous with casual sex or one-night stands. Rather, hooking up, like dating, is a system for socializing with the opposite sex and finding sexual and romantic partners. But while dating called for a couple to get to know each other en route to sexual intimacy, with hooking up the sex comes first (Bogle, 2008, p. 1).

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that, “In today’s efficiency-oriented society, many college students are choosing an alternative to old-fashioned dating, which some claim ties them down and constrains their time. Rather, they are having casual sexual relationships and saving their time and money for other pursuits” (Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009, p. 1196).

Nonetheless, these sexual encounters, often referred to as hookups, encompass various behaviors of intimacy, including fondling, kissing and sexual intercourse, usually between partners who have no relational commitment between them (Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009). The importance of educating students about sexual health has long been on the minds of administrators throughout the nation. For example, “many institutions, under pressure from their constituencies or government funding sources, are evaluating their sexuality education courses to determine whether the objectives of the courses are truly being met” (Feigenbaum, Weinstein, & Rosen, 1995, p. 112). Consequently, I feel that it is

important to explore the idea of tricking and the impact this has on the gay male college students' sexual well-being and the implications for higher education.

The approach used in this study was phenomenological, which is a form of qualitative research. This method enabled the exploration of the sexual behaviors of gay male college students and the implications these behaviors have on their health. Concurrently, this study explored the use of the Internet and social media to facilitate the process of tricking for these students. The participants of this study included five purposefully selected gay male college students. Due to the nature and sensitivity of this study, obtaining participants proved to be more difficult than expected. Fortunately, the point of saturation was reached with the five participants; hence I felt that five participants were a sufficient number of participants to warrant an end to recruitment.

Understanding gay male college students' sexual behaviors and their use of the Internet and social media to facilitate tricking encounters will prove most useful to the field of higher education. The implications of highlighting the tricking encounters of gay male college students will impact the way that student affairs and academic professions engage the necessary resources that are crucial for this student population. Consequently, this study aimed to provide student affairs and academic professionals important information that may be used to engage these students in conversations that will increase awareness of sexual and personal safety.

I begin this chapter with the problem statement and research approach that I used in this study. In addition, I discuss my assumptions regarding this research and my personal

perspective as the researcher for this study. Lastly, I discuss the rationale and significance of this study, which is followed by the definitions of terminology.

Statement of Problem

The current research on college students' sexual risk behaviors focuses on heterosexual students, whereas there is very little research focusing on the sexual risk behaviors of gay male college students. The purpose of this study is to explore tricking of gay male college students and its implications on gay male health practices. There is a multitude of resources on college campuses that addresses the minimizing of the sexual risk behaviors of college students, however, due to the stigma that is placed by society on sexuality, rarely are resources solely dedicated to the sexual risk behaviors of gay male college students. Furthermore, there is a need to discuss the use of the Internet and social media in facilitating these tricking encounters and the impact on the well-being of gay male college students.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore tricking by gay male college students and its implications on higher education and gay male health practices. It has been noted that the Internet affords the ability for various erotic connections which focus on the emotional, rather than the physical, aspect of sexuality (Cooper, McLoughlin, & Campbell, 2000). Consequently, it is noteworthy to highlight their use of the Internet and social media to engage in tricking, how these experiences impact them as gay male college students, their well-being, and the perception of resources available to them on campus. The participants of

this study included five purposefully selected individuals, which was a mix including three undergraduate and two graduate students. The overall goal of this research is to add to the limited literature in this area in hopes of engaging student affairs and academic professionals in the crucial conversations that should be taking place about the sexual and emotional health of the gay male college student population.

This study provides information that can be used in educating and advocating for additional resources for this population of students, such as personal safety and lubricants to use during sexual intercourse. Additional findings from this study may be used to educate and advocate for the necessary resources needed for this population of students, including that of health education, relationship building and safer use of the Internet and social media that are used to facilitate tricking.

Research Questions

My research questions address the tricking of gay male college students and how they use the Internet to facilitate their tricking encounters. The questions are general enough to engage this research and address the different layers of the sexual well-being of gay male college students. The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How do gay male college students make meaning of their tricking encounters as college students?
2. What roles might the Internet and social media have in facilitating gay male college students' tricking encounters?

3. How do gay male college students perceive the adequacy of existing sexual health resources available to them on campus?
4. What personal safety measures do gay male college students practice when tricking?

Theoretical Framework

This research seeks to understand the sexual health resources that gay male college students need. It is hypothesized that the existing resources are inadequate and that universities should provide additional resources to these students' to continue their health and well-being success. The theoretical frameworks I used in this study are the Health Belief Model (HBM) and the Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity (EMGMI). The HBM addresses how individuals negotiate their own health risks based on the activity. The EMGMI advances psychosocial influences affecting gay men in a holistic way. Hence, it is important to note that both the HBM and EMGMI models directly tie into the overall purpose of this study.

The HBM was “conceived by social psychologists in the public health arena as a way of predicting who would utilize screening tests and/or vaccinations” (Redding, Rossi, Rossi, Velicer, & Prochaska, 2000, p. 181). According to Redding, et al., the HBM predicts that the probability that individuals will engage in an action to prevent illness is dependent upon their perception that:

- the individuals are vulnerable to the condition
- there would be serious consequences from the condition
- the precautionary behavior of the individual effectively prevents the condition

- the benefits of reducing any threats from the serious condition exceed the costs of taking action (2000).

It is also noted that all four of these factors are influenced by various mediating variables and encompass the prospect of performing preventive health behaviors of the perceived threat of illness and the expectations of the outcome (Redding, et al., 2000).

The EMGMI advances psychosocial influences affecting gay men in a manner that is holistic. The stages in this model provide a framework for understanding how gay men may evolve in their gay male identity and the impact this evolution has on their own behaviors and decisions as an individual and as part of the gay male culture. According to this model, most gay men go through four main stages, which are discussed below. However, the EMGMI model combines stages one and two and describes this combined phase as the period of time before coming out. The next two stages are referred to as the period of time during coming out and after coming out (Alderson, 2003).

The model acknowledges the individualized stages and their associated processes. Cognitive dissonance is the driving force that interconnects the stages. This occurs when two or more affects, cognitions, behaviors or combinations thereof intersect (Alderson, 2003). The model (Figure 1.1) portrays four main spheres that influence on gay male identity development. The outer circle surrounding the triangles represents the most global influences in the model, which are societal in scope (Alderson, 2003). In addition, “moving inwards, the next three influences are the other environmental factors that affect the individual before, during, and after coming out: (1) parental/familial, (2) cultural/spiritual, and (3) peer influences” (Alderson, 2003, p. 77). Each of these factors exerts influence throughout the stages and processes of gay male identity achievement. As an individual’s development is

ongoing, albeit potentially changing, the person is only described under the first stage. Both of these theoretical models provide a framework with which to explore how best to engage gay male college students in education about their sexual risk behaviors (Alderson, 2003).

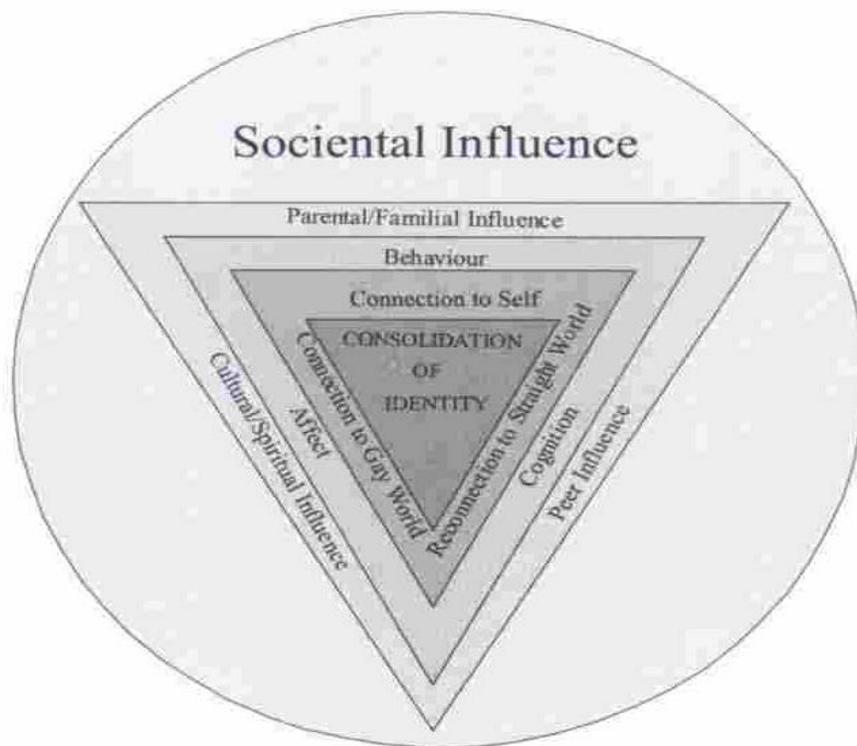


Figure 1.1 Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity

Significance of the Study

There is a need for student affairs professionals to have an understanding of tricking by gay male students and the impact this may have on their well-being. The overall goal of this research is to provide information that can be used in educating and advocating for additional resources for this population of students. It is important to understand the misrepresentation of the sexual conduct of other gay male college students and the possible causes of high risk behavior. These resources should be available to educate gay male college students and to advocate realistic and safer sexual contact with others, ultimately decreasing risky sexual behaviors that may occur. The findings from this study may be used to educate student affairs professionals and to advocate for the resources needed by this population of students, such as safer use of the Internet and social media to facilitate tricking encounters, health education, safer sex education, healthy body image education and relationship building.

The implications of highlighting the tricking encounters of gay male college students will impact the way that student affairs and academic professionals engage the necessary resources that are crucial for this student population. Furthermore, there is a need to discuss the use of the Internet and social media in mediating these tricking encounters and the impact it has on the well-being of gay male college students. Some researchers assert that the Internet dramatically impacts human sexuality (Cooper, et al., 2000). The existing research in these areas is limited, providing little guidance to student affairs professionals who wish to serve this population of students better.

Chapter Summary

This study explored gay male college students' sexual behavior and its implications in higher education. The approach used in this study was phenomenological, which is a form of qualitative research. This method enabled me to explore the sexual behaviors of gay male college students and the implications these behaviors have on their health. The framework used in this study was the Health Belief Model and the Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity. The HBM addresses how individuals negotiated their own health risks based on the activity. The EMGMI advances psychosocial influences affecting gay men in a manner that is holistic. Hence, it is important to note that both the HBM and EMGMI theories directly tie into the overall purpose of this study.

Definition of Terms

Trick: The word trick has multiple meanings, but is often used by the gay community as a slang word to mean hooking up. According to Reuter, the word trick is defined as “a casual, inconsequential sex partner” (2006, p. 213). In addition, the history of the slang word trick and definition are as follows:

‘Tricks’ are treats for some gay men. The term “trick” is most commonly used by gay men when referring to an anonymous sex partner, or “one-night stand.” This word is popular among young gay men, and in particular, in large metropolitan areas like New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. The term was popularized in 1999 with the cult gay film, “Trick” starring Christian Campbell and John Paul

(“J.P.”) Pitoc. The film follows an aspiring playwright (Campbell) and a hunky go-go dancer (Pitoc) as they make their way through Manhattan in an attempt to follow-through with a one-night stand. – noun 1. an anonymous sex partner; usually a gay male. –verb 1. the act of an anonymous sexual encounter; sometimes resulting in the transfer of money (wordofthegay, 2008).

Gay: For the purposes of this paper, gay is defined as having a sexual orientation that includes attraction to members of your same sex. According to the American Psychological Association, “Sexual orientation refers to the sex of those to whom one is sexually and romantically attracted. Categories of sexual orientation typically have included attraction to members of one’s own sex (gay men or lesbians), attraction to members of the other sex (heterosexuals), and attraction to members of both sexes (bisexuals) (Representatives, 2011).

Social Media: For the purpose of this paper, social media is defined as “forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)” (Merriam-Webster, 2011).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study addresses the true needs of gay male students. Hence, universities should provide additional resources to these students to ensure their continued success. The models used in this study are the Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity (EMGMI) and Health Belief Model (HBM), which focus on gay male college students and their well-being. The EMGMI incorporates the psychosocial factors of the identity development of gay men. The HBM conveys how individuals negotiate their own health risks based on the activity. Both of these models directly tie into the overall purpose of this study. In addition, it is important for me to explain gay identity development more thoroughly. Furthermore, to gain a multidimensional perspective of homosexual identity formation, I review other major gay identity models that are widely used and accepted throughout academia, student affairs, and higher education.

Cass's Model of Homosexual Identity Formation

Cass's Model of Homosexual Identity Formation was developed by Vivian Cass and is used throughout higher education programs in the United States. Her cognitive development model identifies six identity stages (see Table 1.1) may impact a person who identifies as being homosexual. Cass contends that this is a lifelong process, with some people returning to previous stages in their life.

The six identity stages are sequential. The following is a brief summary of the identity stages: (a) Identity Confusion (Am I gay?), (b) Identity Comparison (I may be gay.),

(c) Identity Tolerance (I am not the only one.), (d) Identity Acceptance (I am gay), (e) Identity Pride (I am proud to be gay), and (f) Identity Synthesis (Being gay is just part of who I am.) (Cass, 1979).

Each of these identity stages transition into the following stage in this model, with the person ultimately understanding that being gay is just an aspect of their identity. It is important to note that “coming out to self is [often] depicted as a struggle between personal experiences relating to feeling ‘different’ and the social devaluation of homosexuality, which will be internalized to some extent” (Gough, 2007, p. 155). There are many more elements that develop each stage; but in short, the above offers you an abridged version of the Cass model.

As “gay or lesbian identity crystallizes, individuals are more likely to desire involvement with members of the same orientation” (Morrison, Morrison, & Sager, 2004, p. 130). This has implications for gay men, as they are naturally drawn to attracting other gay men, and hence have a heightened awareness of their physical appearance, bodies, and how they are perceived by other gay men. Even though gay identity development may be a lifelong process, it is also important consider at what stage individuals are in their gay identity development.

Table 1.1

Cass's (1979) Model of Homosexual Identity Formation

Stage	Name of Stage	Description of Stage
One	Identity Confusion	There is an awareness of same-sex feelings or behaviors that might indicate one might be gay. There is confusion about "Who am I?" and feeling that one is different from others.
Two	Identity Comparison	There is an awareness of the possibility that one is gay and starts to think about the implications of being gay. There is self-alienation in this stage. "I am different---I don't want to be different."
Three	Identity Tolerance	There is increased contact with the LGBT community, if accessible. There is increased tolerance of being gay, but the individual may continue to present self as being heterosexual. "I'm probably gay."
Four	Identity Acceptance	There is increased and continued contact with other gay people. The person moves from tolerance to acceptance of their gay self-image. The question of "Who am I?" is mostly resolved. "I am gay."
Five	Identity Pride	There is increased pride in self and identification in being a part of the gay community. The person feels anger towards heterosexuals and devalues many heterosexual societal "norms." The person openly discloses identity to be a part of the community. The person also may become very active and pursue activism in the gay community. "Them vs. Us."
Six	Identity Synthesis	There is an understanding of one's gay identity and that is only one part of the person's identity. There is no desire to hide their identity from others. There is a decrease in anger and pride. "Them vs. Us" is resolved. "This is just part of who I am."

*Adapted from Cass (1984)

McCarn and Fassinger's Inclusive Model of Lesbian/Gay Identity Formation

McCarn and Fassinger's Inclusive Model of Lesbian/Gay Identity Formation was developed by Susan McCarn and Ruth Fassinger, initially for the purpose of developing an identity model specific to lesbians. Their model has been transformed and extends to general gay identity development, similar to other models. Unlike other models, the McCarn and Fassinger's model holds that there are two separate (but reciprocal) processes of identity formation. In addition, the McCarn and Fassinger model (see Figure 2.1) takes into consideration that other models suggest that gay people eventually develop a comfort level of coming out to others, whereas Fassinger 1998 contends that "LGB individuals who are members of racial/ethnic, religious, or occupational groups in which homophobia is especially virulent are likely to experience strong pressure to hide their identities in order to maintain needed and valued ties to those groups" (p. 16).

Moreover, McCarn and Fassinger propose an identity developmental model that they considered to be "inclusive of demographic and cultural influences and less reliant on identity disclosure as a marker of developmental maturity" (1996, p. 16). The model contends that there are two separate, yet reciprocal, processes of identity formation and they are as follows: a) an individual and internalized process of identity-labeled (I) and b) an individual and internalized process of group identity-labeled (G). Preceded by non-awareness, each of these two processes follows a four-phase series.

The series of phases starts with a) general awareness, b) exploration, c) deepening commitment, and concludes with d) internalization/synthesis. In the awareness phases, the person may feel different than others (I) or acknowledge the existence of different sexual orientations in people (G). Moving into the next phase of b) exploration, a person may

explore strong or erotic feelings for the same sex (I) or their position as a member of the gay community (G). In the next phase, c) deepening commitment, the person is likely to acknowledge their sexual orientation and have self-fulfillment in that choice (I) or with an awareness of being oppressed as a member of the gay community, seek to increase their involvement (G). Lastly, in the d) internalization and synthesis phase, the person may internalize attraction for the same sex as part of their overall identity (I) or as a member of a minority group (G). A person can be at different phases in each phase, since the model has two phases, that of individual (I) or group (G) (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996).

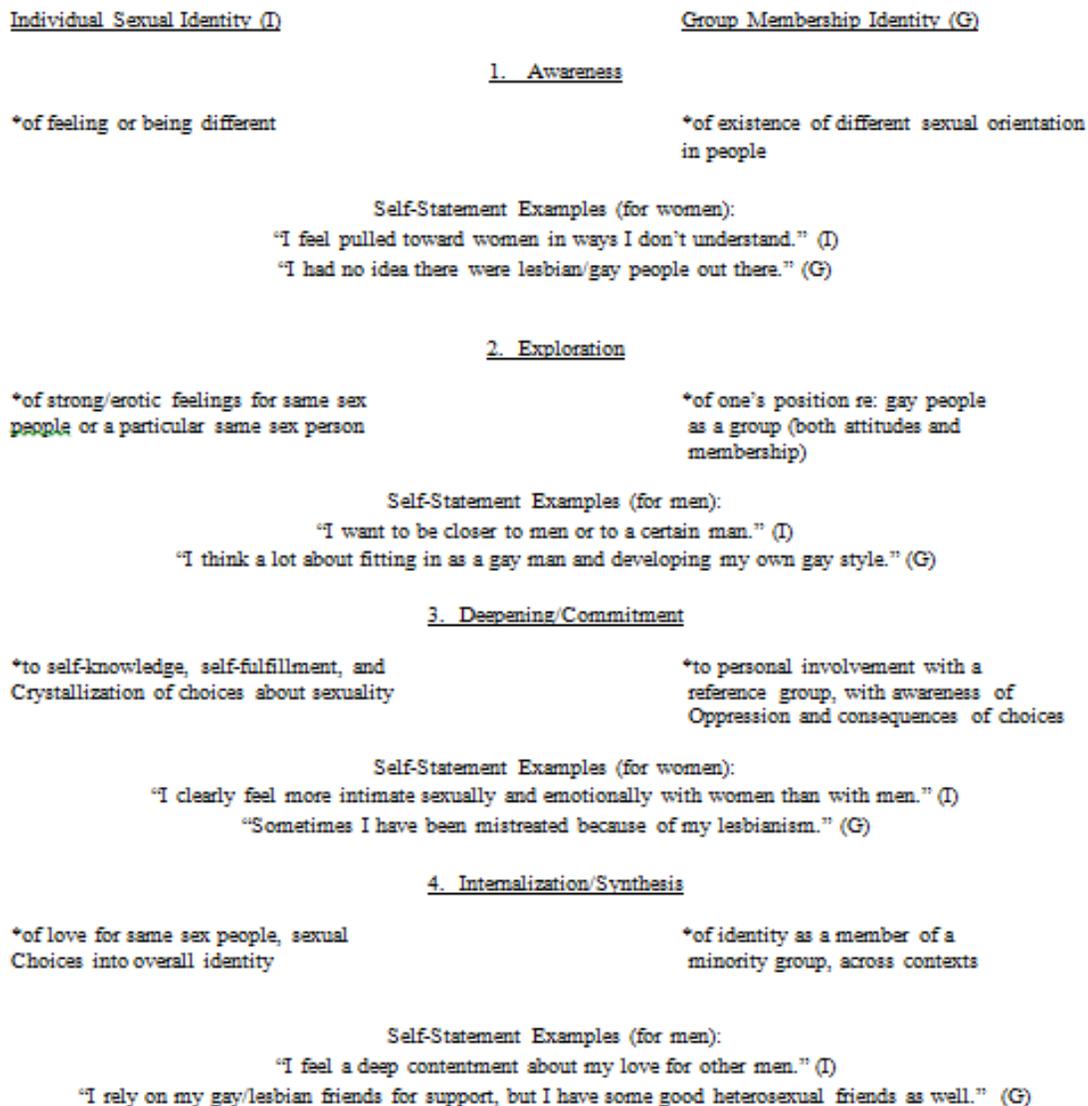


Figure 2.1 McCarn and Fassinger's (1996) Inclusive Model of Lesbian/Gay Identity Formation

D'Augelli's Lifespan Model of LGB Identity Development

Anthony R. D'Augelli's (1994) Lifespan Model of LGB Identity Development is well known in higher education. His identity development model of social construction provides us with three interconnected (see Figure 3.1) variables, a) personal and subjective actions, b) interactive intimacies, and c) sociohistorical connections. D'Augelli contends that a person's identity changes and evolves over the life course, similar to social circumstances and environmental changes that occur around us. In order for an individual to attain a gay identity, D'Augelli stresses two actions that the person must take, a) the individual should distance themselves from a heterosexist life, and b) the individual should create a new gay identity (D'Augelli, 1994).

D'Augelli's identity development model of social construction provides us with three interconnected variables, a) personal and subjective actions, c) interactive intimacies, and c) sociohistorical connections. D'Augelli expands upon each of these three variables as follows:

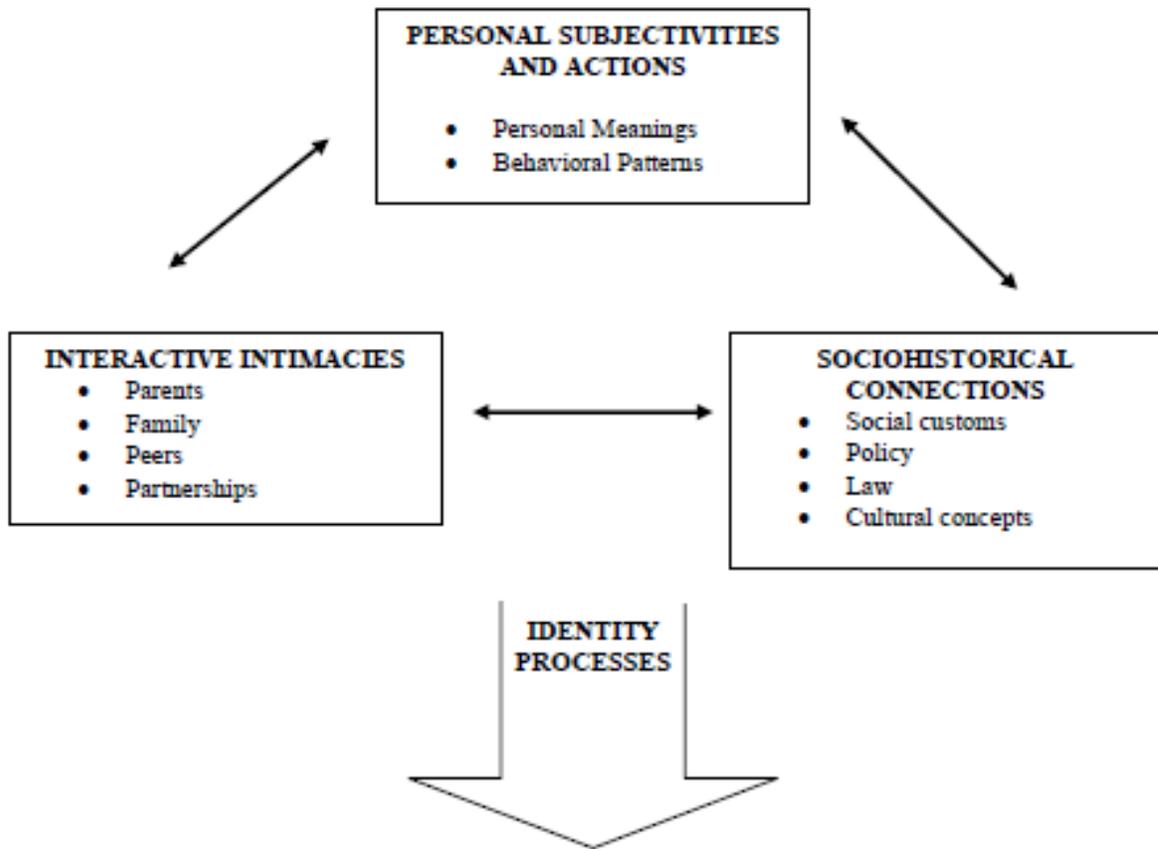
1. How individuals feel about their sexual identities over their lives, how they engage in diverse sexual activities with different meanings, and how they construct their sexual lives and feel about them (subjectivities and actions). These variables are influenced by the next two sets of variables.
2. How sexuality is developed by parental and familial factors, how age-peer interactions shape and modify the impact of early parental and familial socialization, and how this learning affects and is affected by intimate partnerships of different kinds (interactive intimacies). All of this results from and affects the third set of variables.

3. Social norms and expectations of various geographic and subcultural communities; local and national social customs, policies, and laws; and major cultural and historical continuities and discontinuities (sociohistorical connections) (1994, p. 318).

Furthermore, the three above mentioned variables are closely woven into six interactive processes that impact the development of a person's identity as a member of the gay community. Unlike Cass's (1979) stage model in which the stages happen in a set order, the variables in D'Augelli's model occur in relationship to the social and cultural environment that the person is part of. Therefore, there is no set progression for the variables. However, D'Augelli proposes that as an integral part of the progression, the following six processes are important to consider:

1. Exiting heterosexual identity
2. Developing a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity status
3. Developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual social identity
4. Becoming a lesbian-gay-bisexual offspring
5. Developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual intimacy status
6. Entering a lesbian-gay-bisexual community (1994)

D'Augelli suggests that the cultural and environmental setting of the individual has a strong impact on the person's development; hence the individual has the ability to control and impact one's own development as a gay person.



1. Exiting heterosexual identity
2. Developing a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity status
3. Developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual social identity
4. Becoming a lesbian-gay-bisexual offspring
5. Developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual intimacy status
6. Entering a lesbian-gay-bisexual community

Figure 3.1 D'Augelli's (1994) Lifespan Model of LGB Identity Development

Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity

The Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity advances psychosocial influences affecting gay men in a holistic manner. The stages in this model provide a framework for understanding how gay men may evolve in their gay male identity and the impact this has on their own behaviors and decisions as individuals and as part of the gay male culture.

Generally speaking, most models have four main stages. However, the EMGMI model “collapses the first two stages into one (i.e., awareness of homosexual feelings and testing/exploration without gay self-identification) and refers to this phase as before coming out. The next two stages are called during coming out and beyond coming out. The during coming out stage refers . . . to the period immediately following self-identification as gay” (Alderson, 2003). This model acknowledges:

Each stage has its own associated processes. The driving force, both between and within stages, occurs because of cognitive dissonance, which is the mental conflict that occurs when beliefs or assumptions are contradicted by new information. The concept was introduced by the psychologist Leon Festinger (1919–89) in the late 1950s, which results when there is incompatibility in the inability of a husband and wife to cohabit in a marital relationship between two or more cognitions, affects, behaviors, or combinations thereof (Alderson, 2003).

In addition, Alderson 2003 states that the outer circle surrounding the triangles in Figure 1.1 represents the most global influences in the model, which are societal in scope. Moving inwards, the next three influences are the other environmental factors that affect the individual before, during, and after coming out: (1) parental/familial, (2) cultural/spiritual, and (3) peer influences. Each of these factors exert influence throughout the stages and

processes of identity achievement. As their effect is ongoing, albeit potentially changing, they are only described under the first stage.

All of the above gay theoretical development models (Cass, McCarn and Fassinger, D'Augelli, EMGMI) provide insight into how people who are gay come to understanding their sexuality. There are multiple and often interconnected phases or process that one may experience in coming to terms with their identity. Therefore, these models provide a framework with which to understand gay male college students' tricking behaviors.

Health Belief Model

The Health Belief Model (HBM) was “conceived by social psychologists in the public health arena as a way of predicting who would utilize screening tests and/or vaccinations” (Redding, et al., 2000). Furthermore, the HBM is used as a predictor of the probability that someone will engage in an action to prevent illness and is dependent upon the person's perception that: “they are personally vulnerable to the condition; the consequences of the condition would be serious; the precautionary behavior effectively prevents the condition; and the benefits of reducing the threat of the condition exceed the costs of taking action” (Redding, et al., 2000). Further, it is also noted that “these four factors, which are influenced by mediating variables, indirectly influence the probability of performing protective health behaviors by influencing the perceived threat of the illness and expectations about outcome” (Redding, et al., 2000).

Gay Masculinity

Masculinity in itself is complicated, but when you add gay, the descriptive word, in the mix, the concept becomes even harder to grasp. Judith Butler has contributed to queer theory in ways that has attracted both praise and criticism over the years. *Gender Trouble* became very popular when it was first published in 1990. “Butler’s argument in *Gender Trouble* is that the coherence of the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality—the natural-seeming coherence, for example, of masculine gender and heterosexual desire in male bodies—is culturally constructed through the repetition of stylized acts in time” (Wikipedia, 2009). Additionally, Butler suggested that the repetition of these acts throughout history have socially constructed gender, sex, and sexuality as habitual actions of daily life.

Some may feel that Butler’s research introduces the notion that our society has constructed the standard of masculinity. Even more so, others may question whether our society has solidified what it means to be a man or a woman. “From that perspective, any human identity as ‘man’ or ‘woman’ already sets ‘a common ground’ of constraint and in particular it constrains anyone who refuses heterosexuality” (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 18). In essence, many believe that society has dictated that as a man, I am supposed to conform to the idealized meaning of being a man, being masculine, and being the dominate force in relationships.

Taking this a step further, Butler’s theory of gender performativity provides the framework for what we know as gender and sex and are simply repetitive actions of hegemonic practice (Butler refers to this as “doing”), which creates authoritative validity in our society. Simple examples of repetitive actions of hegemonic practice are that girls are

supposed to wear pink and boys are supposed to wear blue. Furthermore, what we perceive as masculine and feminine, or as male and female, are solidified in deep rooted effects of the reiterated and repetitive “doing” or acting out gender and sexuality. Consequently, the reiterative performance of sex and gender have become fixed in our culture as perceived norms throughout time (Butler, 2004, p. 21).

The performativity of sex and gender is deeply engrained in our hegemonic culture, in our speech, and in our daily actions, often from birth. The color pink is associated with femininity and the color blue is associated with masculinity. Some men may feel that their masculinity may be challenged or questioned if they wear the color pink. Others, such as my heterosexual twin brother challenge this engrained nature of our society and chooses to wear pink and is currently a stay-at-home husband and father.

Masculinity is very complex and has multiple layers. As gay men, there is often an imposition of masculinity, yet slightly intertwined with femininity. Some researchers feel that the connection between masculinity and gender is not always clear. Butler (2004), suggests that when we fail to correctly connect gender with masculinity (by cultural standards) we often stick out like sore thumbs. Being femme or butch, dressing in drag or tight-fitting clothing are just a few characteristics of gay men, which may be in contradiction to the fundamental assumptions of what it means to be masculine. Hence, culturally, there is a threat to the socialized foundations of gender expression. For that reason, those who do not conform are subjected to laws to maintain the hegemonic practices of the body, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and being masculine or feminine in nature.

According to Filiault and Drummond 2007, the theory of hegemony contends that within any power structure, there is always a single superior group who occupy the highest level of respect, which includes dominant power and unyielding control. If this group is successful in creating and maintaining its hegemonic ways of knowing over the lesser groups, its likelihood of maintaining power and control is almost certain. Consequently, the dominate gender, in this case, the male, seeks to solidify his position as the powerful and ultimate class. This is done through media image and social institutions, which present the image of male “doing”.

Taking a closer look, I argue that it is imperative that we acknowledge that most men reject femininity, which enables them to reinforce what it means to be a man. An example of the rejection of femininity is how men sexually exploit and objectify women in our society. Women are seen as sexual objects, play toys, and mere chattel by men to fulfill their sexual desires and need to exert power over women. This hegemonic rejection of femininity impacts gay men in that “through the inclusion of homophobia as integral to hegemonic masculinity, a gay masculinity is established as a marginalized form of masculinity, and gay men are *a priori* excluded from the hegemony” (Filiault & Drummond, 2007, p. 176).

It is important to recognize that many physical attributes contribute to this hegemonic idealization of masculinity. How men perceive the male body and the intersectionality of their masculinity can be a struggle for most. Combined with their race, prescribed gender, and sexual orientation, men grapple with the overall impact of the idealized hegemonic masculinity. Men have to consider not only the intersectionality of their masculinity, but also how they are perceived by others. To add more layers, men not only have to be concerned with their intersectionality as men, but how their intersectionality ties into the overall

interlocking systems of oppression, which they are implicated in as the dominate gender in our society (Collins, 2004). Some may question if the privileges that are afforded to a straight, white male are the same for a gay white male. Consider the fact that “western men perceive a large, muscular body as being emblematic of masculinity” (Filiault & Drummond, 2007, p. 176). With this taken into account, I ask that you consider the implications this has for those who do not fit into this mold. It is also important to associate both the male mindset and the male’s overall physique as being at the core of hegemonic masculinity, and which allows for power and privilege. If a man lacks the hegemonic masculinity, he runs the risk of being a part of a marginalized group, therefore devaluing his position in society (Filiault & Drummond, 2007).

Gay Male Body Image

Body image is a crucial part of the gay male community. Wrench and Knapp contend that the “physical appearance and attraction are two interrelated concepts that clearly impact the day-to-day lives of most people” (2008, p. 472). The significance of physical appearance is often consistent, although what is considered to be attractive greatly varies culturally. People who are considered to be attractive tend to be rewarded and glorified, whereas those who are not tend to be ridiculed, marginalized, and isolated in our society (Wrench & Knapp, 2008). In addition, “empirical literature on this topic *seems* to indicate that gay men and heterosexual women experience higher levels of concern over body image” (Morrison, et al., 2004, p. 128). According to Pyle & Loewy 2009 , the media typically represent the stereotypical gay male as being young, thin, and muscular. Gil (2007) contends that “body

image is a multidimensional construct of the self, consisting of how individuals think, feel and behave regarding their own physical attributes” (p. 237).

Historically, a “shift can be noted in the idealized gay bodies of the 1960s to those revered today” (Filiault & Drummond, 2007, p. 178). During the 1960s and 1970s, the local gay culture flourished in many major cities. The rise of gathering places, such as coffee shops, book stores, dance clubs and even bath houses were remarkable. These places provided outlets for gay men to socialize in an environment that provided some sense of belonging. However, along with this, there was even more importance placed on physical appearance in the gay culture.

Beginning with the 1960s and 1970s, in order to be socially accepted into the gay culture, gay men were required to maintain the right appearance. If they failed to conform to this appearance, they often were isolated and denied the ability to participate in the local gay dance clubs, etc. Physically looking the role became so essential to the community, that the term “The Clone,” or more commonly the “macho man” was coined as a popular name for anyone who fit into the image (Filiault & Drummond, 2007, p. 178). In my mind, the Clone, resembles, Popeye the Sailor Man. Popeye was very muscular, had a V-shaped body, and looked super masculine in appearance. Popeye also had his famous five o’clock shadow, an overall rough look, and worked as a sailor. Typically, Clones worn tight fitting blue collar clothing, including jeans, flannel shirts, leather, and boots. Their overall appearance tended to be rugged and raw. This is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below, as represented by Tom of Finland (famous for erotic art) and included in the Filiault & Drummond article.

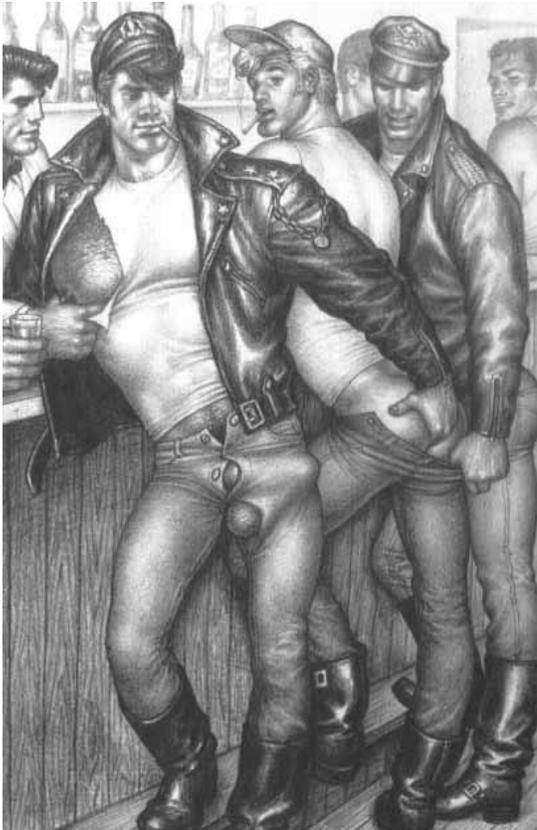


Figure 4.1 by Tom of Finland

*Filiault & Drummond 2007

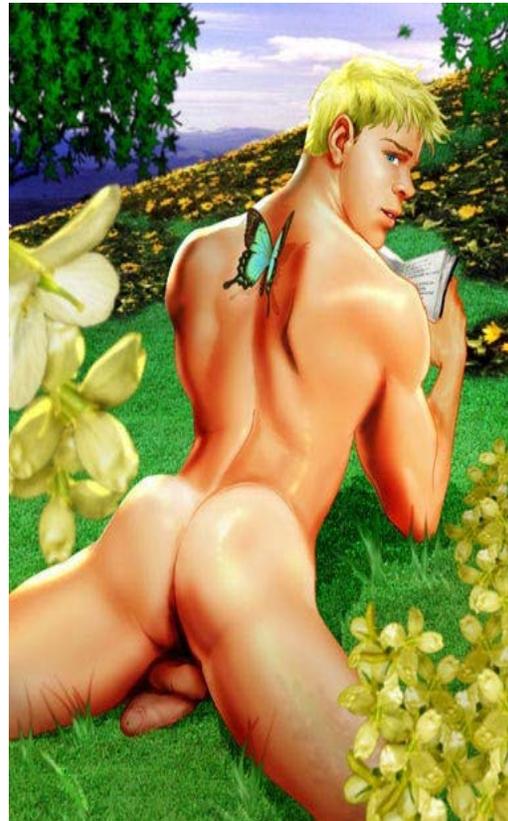


Figure 5.1 by Joe Phillips

*Filiault & Drummond 2007

Notwithstanding, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, a new body type emerged. The new body type was younger, thin, and slightly muscled from head to toe. The closest realistic image that I can frame this look to is the younger Orlando Bloom as the character Legolas Greenleaf in the movie *The Lord of the Rings*. He was blond, thin, muscular, very attractive, and a heartthrob for all the ladies and gay men alike. Pictures of him often reveal a smooth body, a nice six-pack, and just a few strands of hair on his chest. In addition, he was always well dressed, clean cut, well groomed, and trend-setting in his overall appearance. He represented the new look, the “twink” look, down to his shoes. In essence, twink is the modern day version of the clones (Filiault & Drummond, 2007). Figure 5.1,

above is a famous example of the twink look and is used in the Filiault and Drummond article.

Sexual Behaviors and Health Risks

Tricking is very real in the gay community and extends to gay male college students tricking and the use of the Internet and social media to facilitate tricking. Current research focuses on the sexual risk behavior of heterosexual students, whereas there is a void of research that addresses the sexual risk behaviors of gay male college students. “Hooking up is not new. It has been an entrenched part of campus culture for decades. In fact, the shift from dating to hooking up is the result of many social changes, which began in the mid-1960s” (Bogle, 2008). The vast majority of literature on college student tricking addresses the sexual behaviors of college students in general, often focusing on male-female courtship and sexual contact. Notably, “sexual behavior, however, if not risky or promiscuous sexual behavior, is often portrayed as a normal part of the college experience” (Martens et al., 2006, p. 296). According to Bogle (2008):

Following the sexual revolution, students delayed marriage and other adult responsibilities; they had a more liberal view of sex before marriage and often considered their college years a time to party. Increasingly, college years became a time when men and women could engage in casual relationships. So hooking up began and has flourished because students now have unfettered access to each other, and because casual relationships have become socially acceptable. (p. 32)

Other researchers have noted that, “in today’s efficiency-oriented society, many college students are choosing an alternative to old-fashioned dating, which some claim ties them down and constrains their time. Rather, they are having casual sexual relationships and saving their time and money for other pursuits” (Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009, p. 1196). Nonetheless, “These sexual encounters, known as ‘hookups,’ involve a range of intimate behaviors, from kissing and fondling to sexual intercourse, between partners who do not have relational commitments” (Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009, p. 1196). The importance of educating students about sexual health has been on the minds of university administrators. “Many institutions, under pressure from their constituencies or government funding sources, are evaluating their sexuality education courses to determine whether the objectives of the courses are truly being met” (Feigenbaum, et al., 1995, p. 112).

Regarding sexual education, it is noted that, “opponents of sexuality education argue that such education contributes to some of the social risks experienced by adolescents, including premarital sex, unintended pregnancy and increased incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and results in the general ‘moral decay’ of society” (Feigenbaum, et al., 1995, p. 112). Furthermore, the other side of the debate is that “proponents of sexuality education in the schools argue that students do not receive enough information or correct information at home to protect themselves from these risks, thus increasing their vulnerability to unwanted pregnancy and STDs” (Feigenbaum, et al., 1995, p. 112). Similarly, “sexuality education courses, according to proponents, can enhance students’ decision-making skills, decrease risk-taking behaviors, and increase students’ problem-solving strategies, leading to an overall decrease in these social problems” (Feigenbaum, et al., 1995, p. 112).

Other researchers note that “college students tend to misrepresent their sexual histories to their partners in order to appear less risky” (Scandell, Klinkenberg, Hawkes, & Spriggs, 2003, p. 121). Similarly, we should take into account that “students tend to report to their current partners underestimates of the number of previous sexual partners and the frequency of unprotected sexual behavior because both students and people in general use information concerning partner’s risk potential as a determination of condom use, misrepresentation of risk behaviors may have serious health implications” (Scandell, et al., 2003, p. 121).

Although current research related to college student tricking is predominately focused on heterosexual students, there have been few articles that discuss tricking by gay college students. The implication of sexually risky behavior is even more salient on some college campuses. Eric Hoover (2003) talks about the tricking culture of gay college men in public spaces, more specifically that of public bathrooms. Boston University was faced with a multitude of complaints about activities happening in certain bathrooms, hence the university police decided to investigate the complaints. As a result:

Graffiti in a bathroom stall led the police to a Web site, cruisingforsex.com, that lists popular places for public sex between men, including bathrooms at dozens of colleges nationwide. After logging on, officers learned that the site noted numerous lavatories on the campus as hot spots for the illicit encounters (Hoover, 2003, p. 31).

The practice of sexual encounters in public spaces, more specifically that of public bathrooms is known as a “tearoom” (Reuter, 2006, p. 206). The tearoom culture has long been a controversial and significant part of gay culture. Men used non-verbal signals to

initiate contact for quick sexual encounters, often oral sex, without talking to each other (Hoover, 2003).

These practices on college campuses have raised alarm, not just in terms of the sexual acts, but also in terms of the personal safety of the students who are participating in these behaviors. It has been argued that such behaviors place these students at risk for STDs and compromises their personal safety. Researchers have found that condom use remains low among college students, especially among gay men (Kellogg, 2002). Moreover, “while only 9 percent of all students reported having had two or more sexual partners in the last 30 days, 20 percent of gay male students had had two or more partners. Only 36 percent of gay men reported always using condoms, whereas 48 percent of heterosexuals reported always doing so” (Kellogg, 2002, p. 37). In the same way:

Major restrictions in one’s sexual practices are likely to be seen by many people as reducing the potential for sexual pleasure. Unfailing condom use may also be seen by some as reducing sexual pleasure, as well as having a number of other disadvantages, such as the difficulties of condom negotiation, negative implications about the self or partner, and lack of spontaneity (Thompson, Kent, Thomas, & Vrungos, 1999, p. 1143).

This finding suggests that a significant number of resources and attention should be directed towards gay college students and their overall sexual well-being, similar to the resources and attention given to their heterosexual counterparts on college campuses. Furthermore, the allocation of these resources should be given in an equitable manner so as not to alienate students whose sexual identities are already stigmatized by society.

Use of Internet and Social Media

The use of the Internet and social media are increasingly important tool used in our society today. Both the Internet and social media provide almost instant access to unlimited resources and allows all users to feel connected in ways that were not possible in the past. The continuing rise and vital role that the Internet and social media plays in our lives have shaped many of the activities that we do on a daily basis. Today, instead of writing letters to our family and friends, we are able to have instantaneous conversations and connections with them via email, instant messaging, and other forms of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter.

With this instant contact, the Internet and social media have also changed the way that we interact with potential partners, both intimately and physically. Sexuality is a crucial factor in our human experience that is seriously impacted by the Internet (Cooper, et al., 2000). According to Ross 2005, “the increasing salience of sexuality on the Internet, whether cybersex or use of the Internet to make sexual contacts, has focused interest on how Internet-mediated sexuality informs social theory” (p. 342). In the same way, researchers have argued that the sexual discourse of the Internet may be coupled with stimulation and expand to an offline physical encounter (Ross, 2005). In addition, some researchers contend that the technological advances via the Internet will influence on every aspect of sexuality for many years to come (Cooper, et al., 2000).

In the age of the Internet and social media, gay men have used these technologies to facilitate connections with others like them in the comfort of their own homes. Both have allowed gay men to have a sense of safety in being open about their sexuality, and to chat and/or meet those whom they have met through the Internet or social media who share the

same attractions and interests. Furthermore, the Internet allows for instant access to porn and other erotic media. Albright (2008) notes that “men and gays/lesbians were more likely to access porn or engage in other sex-seeking behaviors online compared with straights or women” (p. 175). The use of websites such as xtube.com, pornhub.com, tube8.com, and ratearod.com provide instant and private access to what seems like an almost unlimited supply of porn, often at no cost. These websites contain videos, pictures, and live chat rooms 24/7, 365 days per year. In addition, social websites and social media such as gay.com, manhunt.com, adam4adam.com, craigslist.com, Grindr, Growlr, and Scruff allow gay men to facilitate contact with each other.

These websites do not hide the fact that they primarily exist to allow gay men ways to trick with each other. Their membership is large, often broken down by state and city, which allows those seeking sexual encounters an easy means to connect. Furthermore, some of these websites solicit their users to post various physical characteristics about themselves in their profiles. These include your typical physical descriptions, such as height, weight, and race. In addition, many include information such as your penis size, girth, HIV status, sexual fantasies and preferred sexual role. Based on individual desires, men are able to browse profiles and make connections with others who are in their immediate vicinity. This allows for the possibility of easy connections, both online and in person.

Chapter Summary

In sum, the preponderance of research on college student tricking experiences have largely ignored by males. This study seeks to fill this gap by highlighting the experiences of gay male college students. In addition, universities should provide additional resources to

these students to ensure their continued success. To understand gay male college students and their well-being, this study makes use of the Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity and the Health Belief Model. Use of these models, allows a holistic picture of gay male college students and how they balance body image, masculinity, sexuality, and the use of the Internet and social media to facilitate their tricking encounters. Chapter 3 details of the methodology this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY, DESIGN, AND METHOS

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore tricking by gay male college students and its implications on gay male health practices. This research adds to the limited literature in this area in hopes of engaging student affairs and academic professionals in the crucial conversations that should be taking place about the sexual and emotional health of the gay male college student population. In addition, this study provides information that can be used in educating and advocating for additional resources for this population of students, such as personal safety and lubricants to use during sexual intercourse. The findings from this study may be used to educate higher education professionals and to advocate for the necessary resources needed for this population of students, including those of health education, relationship building and safer use of the Internet and social media to facilitate tricking encounters.

Research Questions

In an effort to examine the tricking of gay male college students and how they use the Internet and social media to facilitate these tricking encounters, this study focused on four research questions. The questions are general enough to enable this research and to address the different levels of the sexual well-being of gay male college students. The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How do gay male college students make meaning of their tricking encounters as college students?

2. What roles might the Internet and social media have in facilitating gay male college students' tricking encounters?
3. How do gay male college students perceive the adequacy of existing sexual health resources available to them on campus?
4. What personal safety measures do gay male college students practice when tricking?

This chapter details the methodology used to address the research questions. I started with the justification for a qualitative research design, more specifically justification for using a phenomenological approach for this study. Moreover, I describe the research participants and my recruitment plan for these participants. I also provide an overview for the overall research design, including the literature review and the process for obtaining the necessary IRB approval to conduct this study. Next, I then describe the data collection for this study, the methods used to analyze and synthesizes the data, and any ethical considerations related to this study. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and a chapter summary.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is deeply grounded in the socially constructed meaning of individuals and how those individuals translate those meanings in their lived experiences (Merriam, 2002). According to Lichtman, qualitative research is woven in the view of the world and reality, which is developed by the researcher (Lichtman, 2006). It is also believed that social phenomena are securitized in qualitative research, therefore looking beyond the

obvious and digging into the hidden meanings (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). In the same way, “the defining characteristic of phenomenological research is its focus on describing the ‘essence’ of phenomenon from the perspectives of those who have experienced it” (Merriam, 2002, p. 93).

According to Glesne (2006) “qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions” (p. 4). Therefore, the defining characteristics of qualitative research engage the researcher in data collection and analysis of the data, engage the researcher in a process of inductive analysis and engage the researcher in cultivating a phenomenon that is rich in description (Merriam, 2002).

The research questions in this study sought to illuminate the subjective experience the participants construct from their tricking encounters. For this reason, quantitative research methods do not fit with this study and are unable to illuminate these experiences in a rich way, therefore not addressing the research questions. However, a qualitative research approach to this study highlights the experiences of the participants socially constructed world and aligned with the goals of this study.

Rationale for Phenomenological Approach

A qualitative research approach to this study best aligned with the goals of this study. Phenomenology seeks to capture the holistic and subjective experience of the respondents (Crotty, 1998). As a guiding factor for this study, “qualitative researchers focus on depth rather than breadth; they care less about finding averages and more about understanding

specific situations, individuals, groups, or moments in time that are important or revealing” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 2). This research approach aims to illuminate the experience of the persons and to provide a detailed description of that experience (Moustakas, 1994). Hence, phenomenology is described as “a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for reflective structural analysis that portrays the essence of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). Therefore, the methodological approach to this study, phenomenology, enabled me to illuminate and comprehend the experiences of gay male college students and their tricking encounters.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is a focused activity that connects the observer to the world through material and interpretive actions, hence making the world more visible. Phenomenologists are concerned with the multifaceted meanings that are constructed from the direct experience of the participants (Merriam, 2002). In addition, the researcher identifies the phenomenon and focuses on the lived experiences of the participants (Lichtman, 2006).

As a type of research method, phenomenology is focused on the assumption of essence or essences that are shared in the experience of participants and those experiences are bracketed, explored, and compared to highlight the phenomenon (Patton, 1990).

In order to understand the essence or structure of an experience, the researcher temporarily has to put aside, or “bracket,” personal attitudes or beliefs about the phenomenon. With the belief temporarily suspended, consciousness itself becomes heightened, allowing the researcher to intuit or see the essence of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2002, p. 7).

A phenomenological approach to this study was necessary to obtain the rich descriptions of each of the participants lived experiences and thoughts. In addition, this allowed the participants to communicate their lived experiences and allow this phenomenon to be shared in a manner that is illuminated in a constructive manner.

Overview of Research Design

Below, I summarize the phases involved in this research process. Following this paragraph, I expand upon discussion of each of the phases. After the completion of my capstone project, which served as the preliminary exam in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, I sought Institutional Research Board approval of this study. The IRB process required the submission of a proposal that outlines the study in an effort to comply with all institutional regulations and to ensure the protection of any human subjects involved in this study. Participants were invited to participate in this study and interviews were conducted in person in a secure and private location on campus. The transcripts from this study were analyzed through a process of open axial coding.

IRB Approval

The IRB is charged with protecting human subjects that may be involved in research conducted by researchers at the university. I received approval from the IRB before conducting any of this research. No contact was made with potential subjects prior to obtaining the approval of IRB to start the recruitment and data collection for this research project. IRB approval was received on September 28, 2011.

Sampling Procedure

The participants for this study were chosen via purposeful sampling, which is a selection method used in qualitative research (Glesne, 2006). Purposeful sampling is defined as “a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 88). The power and logic of purposeful sampling is that it allows the researcher to obtain rich data and allows the researcher to examine a great number of issues that emerge, which are relevant to the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002). Likewise, according to Maxwell (2005), the four most important motivations for using purposeful sampling are as follows:

1. To achieve and illuminate representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities selected.
2. To sufficiently capture the heterogeneity in the population, hence ensuring that the conclusions sufficiently represent a range of the entire variation.
3. To intentionally examine cases that are crucial for the theories that are used at the beginning of the study.
4. To establish comparisons that highlights the reasons for differences between the selected settings or individuals in the study.

The most salient motivation for this study was to capture and illuminate the representativeness of the individuals and their tricking encounters. Qualitative researchers do not work with large enough populations to justify random sampling, and thus they do not seek to generalize the findings to a broader population (Glesne, 2006). Participants for this

study were recruited by referral from the various contacts I made on campus and by word of mouth. Additionally, I requested that participants pass along my research announcement to others who may qualify for this research study. This is a sampling strategy referred to as snowball sampling (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2002) and has proven useful in reaching participants that could be difficult to reach or remain invisible (Lichtman, 2006). The participants for this study were included only if they met the following criteria:

1. University students who are classified as current full-time students.
2. The student experiences same-sex attractions and participated in tricking encounters.
3. The student is willing to be interviewed for this study.

There are various reasons for limiting participants to the selected criteria for this study. First, I have chosen full-time students at a Midwestern university. The institution is a premier public land-grant institution located in a medium sized city located in a Midwestern state. The university enrolls over 28,000 students seeking degrees in a multitude of disciplines and is a member of a large athletic collegiate conference. The reason for choosing this institution is based on my accessibility to the school and the multitude of connections I have fostered throughout the institutions, particularly through the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Student Services, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Ally Alliance and the Delta Lambda Phi fraternity, which is a fraternity primarily for gay students. These connections enabled me access to the gay community that is crucial for this study. Second, I have chosen college males who have participated in male-male sexual encounters, regardless of how they identify their sexual orientation. To attain an abundantly rich and descriptive (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002) qualitative study that allows the participants to tell their

valuable stories, it is important to be as open to the process as possible, hence allowing people to identify their own sexual identity. This is particularly important because their sexual identity and their sexual behaviors are central to this study. I choose to refer to participants' sexual identities as non-heterosexual. This term takes into account that sexual identity is multifaceted, and hence does not box the participants into a specific category. I believe that leaving this open interpretation of their sexual orientation enabled and fostered a sense of trust with the participants in the long run. Third, participants voluntarily agreed to be interviewed for this research study.

Insider/Outsider Status

I acknowledge my insider status as part of this community. According to Schwandt 2007, insider/outsider status is described as:

An internalist or insider perspective holds that knowledge of the social world must start from the insider or social actor's account of what social life means. To know the world of human action is to understand the subjective meanings of that action to the actors. In contrast, an externalist or outsider perspective argues that knowledge of the social world consists in casual explanations of human behavior (p. 152).

Likewise, Griffith (1998) notes that insider/outsider:

Where the researcher enters the research site as an Insider – someone whose biography (gender, race, class, sexual orientation and so on) gives her a lived familiarity with the group being researched – that tacit knowledge informs her

research producing a different knowledge than that available to the Outsider – a researcher who does not have an intimate knowledge of the group being researched prior to their entry into the group (p. 361).

Hence, I brought to this research process personal experience and insights that are particularly valuable for understanding this population. My insider status in doing this research provides me with the opportunities that may not be as easy for researchers who are not part of this community. According to Audre Lorde, “my fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all of my different selves, without the restrictions of externally imposed definition” (1984, pp. 120-121). Furthermore, I am very versed in the unique cultural values and cultural language that is part of this community and how important gay culture is to the identity of those who are a part of this community. I am very aware of the practices and sub-cultures that thrive within the gay community. This community is vastly diverse and can be described in many different shapes, sizes, colors, identities, nationalities, religion, etc.

Many researchers have described advantages to being an insider. Liz Goodman (1996) describes her experience when she conducted research on family farmers in Northern England, more specifically in the Yorkshire Dale. She eventually ended up living with a local farmer named Robert whom she befriended at the local pub. According to Goodman, her insider status benefitted her as follows:

Becoming accepted by the people of the Dale made doing interviews easier even though I never completely overcame my shyness. But sitting in a farmhouse with an

older farmer and his wife was much less awkward when they could start the conversation by telling me about their connection with Robert and thus remove my outsider status by bringing me into their world . . . Because I was living with Robert and participating in daily life of the Dale, it was as if I had married him. I had never before felt that I could claim full membership in a mainstream community; I had never before experienced the comfort of having my right to insider status assumed and understood (1996, p. 56).

Despite my insider status, I can be seen as a possible outsider as well. Within the gay community, there are divisions. These divisions are multi-dimensional and carry some of the same complexities as any other marginalized group carries. More specifically for me, I may be seen as an outsider because of my physical appearance. Within the gay community, there is a huge emphasis placed on physical appearance. I have always contended that the gay community has a very egocentric way of looking at appearance. One either fits into that mold or not. At the same time, “empirical literature on this topic *seems* to indicate that gay men and heterosexual women experience higher levels of concern over body image” (Morrison, et al., 2004, p. 128). In fact, Pyle & Loewy contends that typically media represents the stereotypical gay male as being young, thin, and muscular (2009). According to Gil, “body image is a multidimensional construct of the self, consisting of how individuals think, feel and behave regarding their own physical attributes” (Gil, 2007, p. 237).

Consequently, it is crucial to note that insiders and outsiders often encounter different hurdles in collecting data. Researchers with an insider position overlook or take for granted important details and different sorts of valuable information. This typically occurs when the

researchers identify with the group they are studying, thereby potentially making the interpretation of the data flawed due to their perspectives and lack of fully understanding the perspectives of the participants (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Similarly, “if straight men choose not to explore how their sexuality and gender may affect their perspective, privilege, and power in the field, women and gays, less credible by definition, are suspended between our urgent sense of difference and our justifiable fear of revealing it” (Lewin & Leap, 1996, p. 213).

Data Collection Methods

The following section provides a road map for the various method of collecting the rich data that I obtained to explore tricking by gay college male students and its implications on higher education and gay male health practices.

Interviewing

According to Creswell (2009), interviews, observations, documents and audio and visual materials are four of the most basic methods of qualitative data collection. However, interviews are considered to be the most common qualitative method of data collection (Moustakas, 1994). Through qualitative interviewing, researchers are able to reconstruct events that they have never experienced (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Some researchers view interviews as “a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic” (Janesick, 2004, p. 72). In addition, “in-depth interviewing is the tool of

choice for exploring personal and sensitive issues” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 4). In like fashion, the three elements crucially important to qualitative interviewing are as follows:

One element of this philosophy is that understanding is achieved by encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own terms. A second component of this philosophy is that interviewing involves a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee that imposes obligations on both sides. Third, this philosophy helps define what is interesting and what is ethical and helps provide standards to judge the quality of the research, the humanity of the interviewing relationship, and the completeness and accuracy of the write-up (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 2).

Krathwohl (1998) offers key points to interviewing that are important for any study:

1. Identify yourself and do your best to make the participant feel comfortable.
2. Mirror your reactions to those of the participant. If you are pleasant, this will be reflected by the participant.
3. Use motivations and reinforcement cues for more in-depth answers, such as nodding your head or letting the participant know that the information they are giving you is good.
4. Learn to probe for more in-depth answers to your questions. This can be done by asking the participant to tell you more about the topic.

Due to the nature and sensitivity of this study and concern of having participants drop out of the study from fatigue, one semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant who expressed interest in this study. The interviews were conducted in person at a time and

location that was confidential and convenient to the participants. All interviews were audio recorded. During each interview, I observed the participants verbal and nonverbal communication. I made arrangements to have the transcription of each interview completed by a transcription service. I documented each experience via field notes in order to capture any information that was not captured in the audio recordings.

I used and adapted some of the interview questions for this study based on the hooking up research conducted in the Downing-Matibag & Geisinger 2009 study. The questions that I have adapted and created for this qualitative study are in Appendix D. The questions in the 2009 study asked of heterosexual students, hence they had to be adapted to apply to male students who are sexually active with other males. Due to the nature and sensitivity of this study, one semi-structured 3-phase interview was conducted with each participant. Each interview lasted approximately 75-90 minutes.

Prior to meeting with participants, they were asked to complete a basic demographic questionnaire. This questionnaire included information such as the participant's age, gender, sexual identity, school classification, race, and approximate time frame of their most recent tricking encounter. I adapted this questionnaire from another study (Zimmerman, 2012). Each interview with the participants took place in three phases. Phase one, which occurred at the beginning of each interview, allowed me to review the demographic questionnaire with each participant to verify their responses and get any clarification that may have been needed. I also reviewed all informed consent information and allowed the participants to get any clarification that they may have needed about their rights as participants in this study.

I began each interview only after completing phase one and confirming that participants were comfortable moving forward with their participation in this study. Taking the time to review both the questionnaire and informed consent information allowed the participants and me to begin building rapport, which resulted in useful and meaningful interview data (Lichtman, 2006). During phase two of the interview, I asked the participants various questions as related to this study, which allowed them to tell their own stories, in their own words. In addition, I was also able to ask follow up questions, ask for clarification, or address any questions that arose that would enrich the quality of data as related to their tricking encounters as a college student. It was important to ensure that this face to face meeting was meaningful and productive, which solidified validation to and for the participants in this study. Once I was able to ask all of the questions and make any necessary clarifications during the interview and felt comfortable that everything was addressed, I proceeded into the third phase of the interview.

The third phase of the interview allowed participants to include and sum up any information that they felt was important that may have not been covered during phase two of the interview. This allowed the participants to give validation to areas that they deemed crucially important for others to know. I found that during phase three of the interviews, the participants highlighted points that were mentioned before and/or added their own personal perspectives to this study and the importance it has for them. After phase three concluded, I graciously thanked each participant for their time, energy and views. I reviewed the overall timeframe of the process for the study and the need for them to review my summarization of the interview at a later date. This member check addressed any themes that I identified from

the interviews and obtained clarification on any unclear thoughts or data with regards to my data analysis. After each interview was transcribed and I completed my full data analysis, each participant was offered a chance to look at the original transcripts, a summary of the transcripts, a participant profile that I wrote, and the final report. This was to ensure that participants were able to clarify any unclear topics, and make any corrections and/or additions. This also allowed for clarification of my impressions resulting from the interview. All identifying information of the participants, such as their names, unique physical characteristics and so forth were omitted in the transcripts to allow for participant anonymity. All audio recordings were deleted or erased after they were transcribed.

Journaling

I maintained a reflective journal during the research process, as suggested by (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a result of this journal, I was able to record my various thoughts, impressions, and reactions concerning the data gathering and analysis stages of the project (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). During this study, I took notes, recorded observations and perspectives so that I could capture research experience. I kept a reflective journal to capture the experience in the moment of listening to the vivid and emotional stories from the participants. Therefore, keeping a reflective journal enabled me to meditate on my own feelings, thoughts, and experiences, which added a richness to my personal growth as a result of these experiences.

Methods of Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is described by some researchers as the “analysis that results in the interpretation of action or representation of meanings in the researcher’s own words” (Adler & Clark, 2008, p. 13). The methods of data analysis for any qualitative study should originate with the very first interview in the study (Merriam, 2002). The ongoing process of data analysis should involve continuous review of the data, questions, and memos (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, “interviewing qualitatively generates a great deal of text and the process of analyzing such data is typically more inductive than deductive . . . the most common approach is to read with an open mind” (Adler & Clark, 2008, p. 292). In addition, data analysis offers “comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for reflective structural analysis that portrays the essence of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

For this qualitative study, the data analysis used was Creswell’s (2009, pp. 185-190) six steps of data analysis. Creswell’s six steps are as follows:

- Step 1: Organize and prepare the qualitative data for analysis, including transcribing interviews, optically scanning materials, typing field notes, or sorting and arranging data based on the different sources of information.
- Step 2: Read through all the data in order to obtain a general sense of the data and overall meaning.
- Step 3: Start comprehensive analysis by coding the qualitative data. Coding allows “for focus on the potential meanings of your data” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 157).

- Step 4: Use the coding to produce a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.
- Step 5: Describe how the description and themes will be represented. This is usually done through a narrative passage to report the findings.
- Step 6: Make an interpretation of the qualitative data.

In addition to coding by hand, I was able to use the assistance of NVivo to supplement coding within the transcripts. This type of qualitative software allows researchers to organize, search, and link the data in a way that is user friendly and not as tedious as hand coding. Software is only a tool to assist the researcher, especially since it does not code automatically and requires the directive from the researcher (Glesne, 2006).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is something that every researcher should take seriously. There are a multitude of ways that qualitative researchers ensure data analysis trustworthiness, however this is dependent upon the study the researcher is conducting (Glesne, 2006). The three most common aspects to ensuring trustworthiness in any qualitative study are credibility, transferability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Considered a parallel to the concept of validity in quantitative research, credibility addresses whether the perception of the participants matches the researchers portrayal of

them (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), there are several ways that researchers can ensure credibility:

1. Clarify any bias up front.
2. Discuss repeatedly and substantive engagement in the field.
3. Check continuously whether interpretation of the processes and interactions in the settings are valid.
4. Ensure triangulation of all data.
5. Ensure presentation of any discrepancies in the study.
6. Ensure that you member check your transcripts.
7. Ensure you conduct peer briefing.

Dependability

Considered a parallel to the concept of reliability in quantitative research, dependability addresses whether another person can track the overall process and procedures used to collect and interpret data the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), there are two ways that researchers can ensure dependability:

1. Ensure detailed and thorough explanations of how data were collected and analyzed in the study.
2. Request other associates to code interviews, hence establishing inter-rater reliability.

Transferability

Considered to be a parallel to the concept of generalizability in quantitative research, transferability addresses the fit between the context of the research and other contexts as judged by the readers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), there are two ways that researchers can ensure transferability:

1. Ensure that there is a richness of the descriptions of the data in the study.
2. Ensure the amount of detail regarding the background and context of the study is thorough.

Each of the above approaches and procedures strengthened the credibility, transferability, and dependability of the finding of this study, which increased the trustworthiness of this study as a whole.

Delimitations

In order for this study to address the research questions, the delimitations were aligned and supported the goals of this study. The scope of this study was limited to a very specific population; adult males at least age 18, who experience same-sex attractions, who have participated in tricking encounters and who are current university students. In addition, this study does not attempt to highlight the tricking encounters of any other group at the university.

Limitations

As with any study, this study had various limitations due to the subject nature and sensitivity of this study. Due to the nature of the study and the concern of the impact participating in a study like this may have on the participants, IRB limited the total number of participants to 10. If more than 10 participants wanted to be a part of this study, this would have limited the richness of the data in the study that could have been collected from having a larger participant pool. In addition, another limitation of this study was that it was centered at only one university. A broader discussion about gay college men and tricking might have been possible if the study were inclusive of other campuses and involve participants from those campuses who meet the criteria for this study. Nonetheless, this study highlights and provides insight into this culture and the lived experiences of this understudied population of students. I revisit the limitations of this study in more depth in chapter 5.

Ethical Considerations

Any research study has to take into account the ethical considerations that are important to the success of the study. Various ethical issues may arise during collection of data (Merriam, 2002); hence researchers should anticipate this by ensuring a high level of respect for the participants and the research sites for research (Creswell, 2009). Esterberg notes (2002), qualitative researchers should consider the most relevant ethical considerations in their study to be that of informed consent and participant anonymity. I took the necessary steps to ensure anonymity of the participants. Since this study was of a sensitive nature and could potentially harm the participants if specific identifying details were recognized about

them, I masked any identifying information of the participants. This step was crucial in this study to ensure the participants protection and security. In addition, participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary when they were given the informed consent document. Their right to participate was also reviewed with them before the start of their interview. Participants were made aware of their rights of participation in the study before they agree to participate (Esterberg, 2002).

Taking into account the privacy, rights, and protection of the participants, the following steps as suggested by Creswell (2009) were conducted in an ethical and appropriate manner. The steps taken were as follows:

- Proper IRB approval was granted for this study from the researcher.
- Extra precautions and diligence was taken while working with this vulnerable population.
- Extra precautions and diligence in protecting the identity and privacy of the participants were taken.
- Participants were informed of their right to participate in this study and withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.
- Participants were informed of their right to obtain copies of the interview transcripts, the researchers' interpretation of the interview and the final results of the report.
- Signatures of participants were obtained on the Informed Consent form before participation in the study started.

The importance of ethical considerations in any study cannot be understated and is crucially important in protecting the rights and privacy of participants. As the researcher, I recognized the uniqueness of this study and conducted this study in an ethical, honest, fair, sensitive and just manner.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the general methodology and methods used for this research study. The purpose of this study was to explore tricking by gay male college students and its implications on gay male health practices. A qualitative research approach to this study best aligned with the goals of this study. Phenomenology seeks to capture the holistic and subjective experience of the respondents (Crotty, 1998). This research approach aims to illuminate the experience of the persons and provides a detailed description of that experience (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, the participants for this study were chosen via purposeful sampling. The roadmap that I have provided in this chapter establishes the overall process by which I conducted this project, which is best, suited for the study itself.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to explore tricking by gay male college students and its implications on higher education and gay male health practices. The study highlights participants' use of the Internet and social media to engage in tricking encounters and how those experiences impact them as gay male college students, their well-being, and the perception of resources available to them on campus. Two significant frameworks informed this study, the Health Belief Model and the Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity. The four research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How do gay male college students make meaning of their tricking encounters as college students?
2. What roles might the Internet and social media have in facilitating gay male college students' tricking encounters?
3. How do gay male college students perceive the adequacy of existing sexual health resources available to them on campus?
4. What personal safety measures do gay male college students practice when tricking?

The data gathered to conduct this study were obtained by conducting in-depth interviews with the participants and analyzing questionnaires that each participant completed. Four major findings were identified from the interviews.

1. The Internet and social media were used as a way to connect with others, explore their sexuality and engage in anonymous tricking encounters with other gay men in a relatively anonymous environment without the commitment of any kind of relationship.
2. There was a strong sense of peer pressure and awareness of body image and masculinity issues as member of the gay community.
3. There was a heightened awareness of the potential STD risks of tricking encounters, however physical & personal safety was not a primary concern in these encounters.
4. There was a feeling that campus resources available to the sexual health of gay male college students are minimal.

In this chapter, I present the findings of this study. This begins with an introduction of the participants, followed by a discussion of the four themes with quotations and supporting evidence. In addition, I have attempted to offer the reader a rich and thick description of the experiences of the participants (Merriam, 2002). This should engage and thrust the reader into the world of the participants as much as possible. This is done through illustrative quotations from the interview transcripts, which show the complexities of each participant in their own voice.

Participant Profiles

In this study, a total of five participants met the required criteria to participate in this study. All participants were full-time, male, undergraduate or graduate, students who self-identified as being part of the gay community. In addition, these participants had engaged in

tricking activities as college students. The participants in this study represented various ethnic backgrounds, ages, class standings, academic colleges and relationship statuses at the time this study was conducted.

Tommy, was a Caucasian male in his early 20s. Born and raised in the South, Tommy came across as a very gentle-mannered person who was quiet and reserved, yet had an inner-strength that was robust and unyielding. He considered himself to be a hard worker and very organized. As we sat together in the interview room, it was obvious that Tommy was athletic and loved sport, especially since he was wearing the jersey of his favorite baseball team and a pair of jeans. In addition, Tommy expressed that “I had always been involved with sports growing up and it was a huge part of my life.” Tommy continued to evolve in terms of his sexuality and admitted that he initially had “a lot of self-hatred and shame” about his identity and that he “struggled with it.” As he grew older, Tommy said that “even now, I consider myself partially out, like I’m out to most of my family and to my core group of friends, but that’s about it.” In addition, Tommy struggled to find his own identity within the gay community. Tommy’s evolution as a gay male is truly remarkable and showed the internal struggles that some gay men go through to come into their own identity as an individual who is gay.

Ricky, was a Black male in his late 20s. Born and raised in the Midwest, Ricky presented himself in a very professional, yet easygoing manner. This was due to his previous career in the financial industry and his belief in being professional at all times. This particular day, he wore a cardigan sweater, with designer jeans and his favorite pair of Kenneth Cole shoes. Ricky was very athletic, perceived himself as masculine and confident

in nature and was comfortable with his sexual orientation. In addition, Ricky was very confident and clear in what he wanted. For Ricky, when looking to meet others, “It depends on how they look. That’s the starting point.” In addition, Ricky made it clear that, “for me, I’m looking for typically a nice body.” Ricky had a strong understanding of his identity as a gay male and within the gay community. It is that strong confidence and understanding that allowed Ricky to define who he was and what was important to him.

Ivan, who was in his mid-20s, was an Asian international student from a country in the southern part of Asia. Ivan came across as modest and guarded in nature, but thought of himself as being “stylish, intelligent, cheerful, independent and outgoing.” During our interview, he wore a stripped polo, jeans, and tennis shoes. Ivan was very thoughtful of others, intuitive and concise with his words on many levels. As our interview progressed, I could tell that Ivan thought about everything that he wanted to say, which seemed normal for him. When meeting other gay men, it was important to Ivan that “they should come off as a nice person. If they are mean, shallow, or whatever, it would not attract me.” Ivan was out about his sexuality, but very strategic in the circumstances that allowed others to see this part of him. Ivan was not out to his immediate family about his sexuality, mainly due to cultural concerns in his home country. He walked the delicate balance of guarding and managing his intersectionality as a gay male and being part of the gay community.

Collin, a Caucasian male in his early 20s, was born and raised outside the Midwest. Wearing designer glasses, a Ralph Lauren Polo sweater with a button down shirt, khaki pants and Kenneth Cole dress shoes, you could tell that Collin was very athletic and stylish. He considered himself to be more feminine in nature. He was full of passion, drive, and felt that

he had the inner strength of someone who could change the world. During the interview, his raw emotions and voice captivated me like a box office thriller. Collin considered himself to be openly gay and that he “came out at such a young age.” In addition, Collin felt that “where I grew up and where I come from, it’s like oh the pretty boy, the pretty little gay boy, and a lot of people had this preconceived notion because of the way I looked.” His intense struggles as a gay man and being part of the gay community provided a genuinely heartfelt glimpse at the many trials and tribulations that many in the gay community face.

Kyle, a Caucasian male in his early 30s, was born and raised in the Midwest. Wearing khaki pants, a pullover and tennis shoes, you could tell that Kyle was very practical in nature, down to earth, sociable and intellectually stimulating. His journey as a gay male was unique and offered multiple complex layers that mirror that of many gay men. In addition, he was married with children and took his responsibility as a husband and father to heart. Kyle talked about his journey very frankly and openly and offered a very candid look into a culture whose evolution continues to this very day. He offered a unique insight into the culture of tricking before the Internet and social media and his current experiences as a gay married man. Kyle talked about looking at and being intrigued by a “newspaper where in the back they have the services offered, and there were very often ads for massage with happy ending and those kinds of things.” He also went into detail about his current experiences and his ability to determine “if you want to hook up you still can, but if you’re looking for friends you still can, or someone to have a lunch date with.” His openness to sexuality and participating in various sexual experiences offered a raw look at his identity as a gay man, which may mirror that of other gay men.

A summary of each participant is provided in Table 2.1. This includes his pseudonym, age range, relationship status, ethnic background, class standing, self-identified sexual orientation, previous experiences with tricking, and the timeframe of their last encounter when the interview was conducted.

Table 2.1 Participant Description

Pseudonym	Age Range	Relationship Status	Ethnicity	Current Student Status	Kinsey Scale	Participated in Tricking	Last Encounter Occurred
Tommy	Early 20's	Single	Caucasian	Undergraduate	Exclusively Homosexual	Yes	More than 30 days
Ricky	Late 20's	Single	Black	Graduate	Exclusively Homosexual	Yes	15-30 days
Ivan	Mid 20's	Single	Asian	Undergraduate	Exclusively Homosexual	Yes	Less than 7 days
Collin	Early 20's	Partnered	Caucasian	Undergraduate	Exclusively Homosexual	Yes	More than 30 days
Kyle	Early 30's	Married	Caucasian	Graduate	Predominately Homosexual, only Incidentally Heterosexual	Yes	15-30 days

Summary of Participants

Although each participant was unique, there were many characteristics that these participants had in common, yet many differences between them as well. Each participant in this study had participated in tricking activities as a college student. The frequency and circumstances varied among the participants, but each acknowledged meeting strangers for the purpose of sexual activities. Some of these encounters evolved into friendships, friends with benefits, or relationships, while others maintained the strict purpose of sexual pleasure with little to no contact thereafter.

Each participant used the Internet as a way to facilitate their tricking encounters, however the websites that were used varied. The websites included adam4adam.com, manhunt.com, craigslist.com, okcupid.com, gay.com, planetromeo.com, dlist.com, gaydar.co.uk, and realjock.com (see Appendix A for examples of postings from craigslist.com involving a similar geographical location and Appendix B for the homepage of all the above websites). All of these websites are free for basic use. During this study, the website dlist.com closed down, and is therefore no longer available. Consequently, I was unable to provide an image of their homepage. All of these websites, except for okcupid.com and craigslist.com, are gay-male themed and visited predominately gay males. All of the websites, except for okcupid.com, had graphic nudity and allowed the users to post both nude and non-nude pictures on their profiles or postings. Okcupid.com is a dating website that targets both heterosexual and homosexual people. Nudity is not allowed on the website. In addition, some of the participants in this study acknowledged having their face pictures posted in their profiles; however, none of the participants acknowledged posting nude pictures of themselves on these websites.

Another unique service that was almost universal among these participants was the use of Grindr. Grindr is an application on smartphones that allows users to connect with other users of the application. To use Grindr, you simply download the application with a smartphone, open up the application, and create a profile. Grindr does not allow nudity in users profile; however users are able to show suggestive pictures, such as their upper torsos. Users chat with each other using a text message system and are able to tell what distance they are from other users. This method of connecting with others has the ability to be instant and can take place wherever the user travels. Through my research, I also found similar

smartphone applications, such as Scruff and Growlr. Scruff and Growlr work in the same way as Grindr, however, they both tend to target older and physically heavy-set men and those who are attracted to older and/or heavier men. In addition, adam4adam.com and manhunt.com both offer a smartphone application for their websites. However, the format of these applications is similar to the websites, except a smaller and simpler version made for smartphones. The application was free for adam4adam.com users; however, there was a cost for manhunt.com users associated with using the smartphone application.

The participants in this study conveyed a multitude of experiences, beliefs, ideas, and various intersectionalities of their identities. Their similarities and differences provided rich and thick data that provided me with valuable insight into their experiences. One of the strengths of this study was the diversity of the participants with respect to their backgrounds, experiences, and their unique ability in navigating and negotiating their own identity as part of the gay community. The following section examines the main themes of this study with supporting evidence that emerged from the thick and rich data.

Themes and Analysis

The analyzed data from this study identified a total of four significant and frequently interwoven themes. The themes were as follows: The Internet and social media were used to connect with others, explore their sexuality and engage in anonymous tricking encounters with other gay men in a relatively anonymous environment without the commitment of any kind of relationship; There was a strong sense of peer pressure and awareness of body image and masculinity issues as member of the community; There was a heightened awareness of the potential STD risks of tricking encounters, but physical & personal safety were not

primary concerns in these encounters; There was a feeling that campus resources allocated to the sexual health of gay male college students were minimal. These themes are highlighted in regards to the participant data and the research questions posed in this study in a subsequent section in this chapter.

Use of Internet and Social Media

“I wanted to use the online culture to meet guys, it was a little more secret, a little more private.”-Tommy

The use of the Internet and social media was a crucial part for the participants and aided in the mediation of their various encounters. In addition, this method of connecting with others served other purposes and often allowed for instant interaction, whether via email or cell phone.

Each participant had used the Internet and social media to seek sexual encounters, but also to develop friendships, explore their sexuality, and find potential partners for relationships. For example, Ivan said, “I am looking for a relationship, and this seems to be one avenue to meet people.” Outside of looking for a relationship, when Ivan was looking for a sexual encounter, he said:

Craigslist has been so much more like, up front. People would directly say what they are looking for. I’m looking for a blowjob today or I’m looking to release. It would be a much shorter message that says we mean business and that’s all we’re looking for. It has been a little disappointing because my main objective has been to find

maybe something more substantial and long term, though off and on I have been okay with just meeting casually to have sex.

Similarly, Kyle discussed his use of the Internet in his tricking encounters. Kyle talked about the use of these websites as a way for him to be distracted from his daily stresses.

Initially at first, when I got to Iowa State, I think I did hook up more often in the first couple years of my program. I think part of that was stress, actually, the feeling in the department I was in because the director was a little difficult for me. Our personalities clashed a little bit, and when it came time for sitting up for finals and turning in big papers, I found that going online to gay.com or manhunt was a distraction for me. It wasn't necessarily because I was horny, it was because I just needed a break, and that was something that was appealing to me. It was more frequent the first couple years of my program, and in the last couple years, I've been here four years, has really been a lot less frequent.

Kyle goes on to talk about why his use of the Internet has been less frequent lately. "I think the last time was probably a week ago, when I was on for ten minutes, and it was with somebody on manhunt who asked me about my shirt." Kyle explained that he "answered him, and he said oh it looks like a shirt that was generated with a program that I use, it was a digital image of a teapot." He continued by explaining that "I closed it down because I had other stuff to do. I don't know why I opened it, but I think in general the reason I haven't been going on very much recently is just that it's too time consuming." In addition, Kyle concluded that "I just don't have the time to find somebody, establish rapport, have a conversation, figure out where they live, find transportation there, have them come to me, and have a whole hook up encounter." He went on to express that "It can take half a day

sometimes, and it's just I have other things to do." In addition, Kyle goes on to talk about his experiences using craigslist.com and some of the issues that he has ran into, such as someone agreeing to meet, but not showing up.

I looked into craigslist a bit. I have problems with craigslist. I know some people use it and hook up using it, but it seems to me like a lot of people on craigslist want you to send a photo, and I'm guessing that it's mostly just older guys who are collecting photos. I don't know why they don't just access all the free photos online. I don't think I've ever actually hooked up with anyone on craigslist. The summer before last, I was writing my paper on sexually open relationships, and threesomes and swinging for my class, and because I was reading a lot about it, even though I couldn't use it in my papers or anything, to experience that, so I did responded to someone's ad on craigslist, a married couple that wanted to have a third guy join. I called and talked to the husband a couple times, and we arranged to meet at Panera Bread. When I got there, I didn't see him. If he saw me, he didn't say anything, so that fell through. So I haven't had any luck through craigslist.

In addition, Kyle offered a unique perspective regarding the methods gay men used before the Internet to facilitate tricking encounters. Kyle said:

I think there is some type of newspaper like that in Des Moines probably. The City Weekly offered a way to place a free ad, and people would pay to respond to the ad. So when I first started hooking up with guys, it was through that, and they would leave messages, and I would have to call a number and retrieve the messages that people left for me. They would usually leave a number and I would call them and

arrange a time to go meet with them. That was kind of my slut phase that a lot of gay guys have, and it was mostly through The City Weekly initially.

To continue his historical perspective, Kyle transitioned into his discovery of gay websites, such as gay.com and talked about the impact this had on him. Kyle goes on to say:

Later on, I discovered gay.com and that might have been when I was still in my hometown but a few years later, but it might have been kind of back from my mission and in college. There the computers are protected so that you can't access inappropriate content, and gay.com was one of those that I didn't have access to, with exception of a couple computers on campus. I did find ways to access gay.com and put up a profile and met with guys in that area. That was sort of a second slut phase for me, after a period of being pretty much celibate for a while when I was initially becoming active in the church. Then it wasn't really until later that I learned of other websites, and I think the demographics of the people who frequent gay.com has changed over the years, so when I looked at another university. Then moving here to Iowa here in Ames, I learned that most of the people on gay.com are older, and really the younger people like my age or younger that are more interesting are on adam4adam or manhunt, which I've started to use more.

Ricky also shared some of his experiences when it comes to using the Internet to facilitate sexual encounters with other people. He contends that, "adam4adam is the only one I've ever used." Furthermore, Ricky explained that when looking for tricking encounters:

Well it depends on how they look. That's the starting point. For me, I'm looking for typically a nice body. So I narrow my search to that to begin with. And depending on my attractiveness to that, then I will possibly arrange something that might happen right away, or it might be well let's just talk and see how this goes, and maybe I'm turned on more by the conversation. After the initial adam4adam, it's kind of an email format. Through that exchange via email, that could go on for a while, because I'm not very quick to give a phone number or let's meet at my house. I try to get a feel of is this person crazy, so from that it goes to well I feel comfortable, here's my phone number, let's talk. I think on adam4adam you can chat too. It might lead to an immediate meet-up and an agreement where that might be typically my place or a home, but I've never met in a hotel. Or it might just lead to conversations that might develop into a sexual interaction in a week or so. Typically it's a quick turnaround.

Ricky goes on to say that "it's been a long time since adam4adam worked for me, unfortunately. But when it was working, I would say that day. If the energy was there and it could typically be an evening or night thing, if I started an email conversation by 7, I was probably somewhere by 10 or 11 or someone was at my house, so that day and maybe as short as in five hours." Ricky also shared his experience using the Internet chat rooms. He stated:

I know a lot of people do it, especially in certain cities. Not always to hook up, but to find out what's happening. I can say I'm coming to Detroit or New York, can you tell me where the clubs are, and I've always gotten a response. I guess it's not always

the tricking deal, one guy met me at the club once. That might have been a desire to trick opportunity of his, but that didn't happen.

Similar to Ricky, Tommy was fairly exclusive in his choice of websites and what he was looking for. Tommy said that:

The first website that I went on was called realjock.com and that was a website geared toward gay men who were into fitness and I had always been involved with sports growing up and it was a huge part of my life. My major is fitness and health, and that's a passionate area for me, where my interests lie. A lot of my hobbies are focused on health and fitness. That website was attractive to me because I had similar interests with guys who were into fitness, so I figured going onto this website I could find a guy who had similar interests for me. I've been on there since I was eighteen, so about five years now. Recently I've explored okcupid and manhunt. I rarely use those. My primary one is realjock. Any guys that I've met in person have come from that website, and any other guys that I've really chatted with or webcam have all been from realjock. That is the primary website that I use.

In addition, Tommy talked about using the Internet to explore the gay culture and to figure out his sexuality and to meet other gay guys. Tommy revealed that "I have been using the Internet just to go online since right around when I turned eighteen." In addition, Tommy explained "I went online because I was very closeted at that time, and I didn't know any gay men, and I wanted to start meeting them but I was afraid to do it out in public. I didn't want to reveal myself." Tommy went on to say:

I went online and created some profiles just to start interacting and meeting different guys online and starting to talk. Because I was eighteen, I was young and didn't really know a whole lot the gay culture, there were a lot of questions I still hadn't answered for myself about my own development. I went online not really having a lot of knowledge. I would get a lot of messages and stuff from guys that were just interested in having sex or wanting to webcam, things like that. I deleted all of those because I really wanted to find a guy that I could chat with at first, get to know, maybe meet up with at some point and start a relationship that way. I didn't want to come out of the closet for a long time. I wanted to use the online culture to meet guys, it was a little more secret, a little more private. I wanted to keep those two lives, I guess. I wanted to keep that secret from everyone else. As I got older, I wanted to start being with guys more intimately. I think that's what made me want to be online, and I'd heard about it from commercials and friends and stuff about online dating and I wanted to see what that was about. I checked out some sites to see what it was, and try to check it out.

Many of the participants in this study shared their experiences using the Internet, but they also shared their experiences other kinds of using social media. There has been a shift, from meeting people in bars or through local newspapers, to meeting people in online chat rooms, websites, and through smartphones. The use of social media has soared, especially in the age of evolving technology, that allows for instant access and the ability to contact people all over the globe. Although Grindr is heavily used, similar to other websites, the participants

had mixed feeling about using Grindr. In talking about Grindr, Kyle described the application this way:

Grindr is available only for smart phones. You download the app, and then upload a photo and create a profile. It's pretty easy and fast to do. It reads your coordinates through GPS or whatever, and it can show you guys who are online or guys who are not online but with their cell phones, and shows you how far away they are. It lists them in order of distance. So you can browse people's profiles and chat. It's people that are probably on manhunt or gay.com. Some of them specify that they're not interested in hooking up, that they want to make friends or find a partner. I think for the most part it is a place for people to hook up. They tend to allow more sexually explicit photos there than at some of the other sites.

Kyle talked about his experiences using Grindr. He indicated that his use of Grindr had become less frequent, because of his age. Kyle explained:

I started using Grindr, which is for use just on your cell phone and not the Internet. I met with some people through Grindr but I don't think I actually had sex with any of them, or hooked up. I really only started meeting people for lunch and for social things. I think some of the guys that I met were confused by that, because they didn't see me having any interest, even though maybe I would have, or was. I think my age has something to do with it, since I'm older than others. It has been less frequent recently.

Taking a different view, Tommy indicated his dislike for Grindr because of the ability for others to know your location using the GPS function in the application. Tommy said that “I also had a Grindr account too, but I deleted it within a couple weeks because I didn’t like it. On that, you can know where people are down to feet away and I didn’t really like that, so I got rid of that. I got it probably in June and I got rid of it within a couple weeks.” Similarly, Collin indicated that his use of Grindr was limited because of his feeling towards the gay chat sites and social media in general. Collin indicated that “I guess I didn’t really think of Grindr as an experience. Grindr is an application for iPhone. I had always been kind of like hesitant about these different websites, because I was so nervous about them. I just associated them with being promiscuous.”

Gay Body Image and Masculinity

“I realized that body image and hanging out with certain gay people because they look a certain way or people perceive them to be a certain way was just making me miserable. It was making me miserable and I was not going to do that anymore.”-Collin

Body image and masculinity are of great concern within the gay male community. Body image and masculinity are complicated concepts with multiple layers. When you consider the word gay and combine it with body image and masculinity, both concepts become even thicker and can be harder to grasp. How gay men perceive their masculinity and the intersectionality of the male body can be a struggle. Gay men have to also consider their prescribed gender, sexual orientation, and race. Therefore, gay men grapple with the

overall impact of the idealization hegemonic masculinity and body image, and how they are perceived by others.

The participants in this study were acutely aware of their body image and masculinity and the impact this has had on them in their lives. Being a part of the gay community, participants generally exhibited a strong reaction to being asked about the impact of body image and masculinity on the gay community. Ricky, expressed, “I moved here from Chicago and any gym that I was a part of, and I’ve always been a part of a gym, and that’s a given for a lot of us, you’re working out, you’re trying to be competitive and attractive.” He further elaborated that:

So there is a pressure there. Friends and I, what my perception is, boys may really be thoughtful about, I want to date you, but I’ve experienced this notion that I do, but...there’s a holiday coming up, it’s Labor Day Weekend, you know what happens Labor Day Weekend, that’s party time, get your drink on, do I want to be in a committed relationship. Or you’re cute, you’re smart, you bring a lot, but could I meet someone that’s better next month. I think subconsciously that pushes me to be fit, or at least try to be, to present a certain physical fitness that is attention getting. I know what I’m looking for in the club, and probably the guys in my circle are doing the same thing. We work out four or five days. We’re on the grind with the thought of here I am, I’m putting on a good presentation for a partner, and move me away from tricking.

Ricky also touched on how the issue of body image and masculinity plays out on the Internet and social media. He stated, “I do believe there is definitely a push when you look at the

websites and you look at adam4adam, and what motivates people to post pictures is that they know what people are looking for, and/or they post pictures that's not of them." He elaborated by saying that "it's someone else's picture that they pulled, or from New York that they copied and pasted as their own with the intention of getting some attention." In addition, Ricky elaborated on the copied pictures and explained that, "then you get to the guy's doorstep and the guy says forget it, I'll fuck you anyway. That picture gets them there if they're not that themselves. I think there is significant pressure about physical appearance. Huge! Definitely, 100%!"

In addition, Ricky shared an insight on his theory as to why body image and masculinity are such big issues in the gay community. Ricky concluded that "I think there might be a couple of environmental influences that might speak to it. If there is a large percentage who are single, then there's a drive to be attractive to someone and meet someone." Furthermore, Ricky indicated, "in that sense, my personal appearance has to look good. Also, if I'm single, no kids and no partner, I'm very likely to go out and be in the club, in the social scenes." Furthermore, Ricky said, "again, if I'm interacting with people, I want to be nice looking and take advantage of this opportunity to find someone who thinks I'm good looking and then I won't be single. If there's something connected to a single lifestyle, that pushes people. It could be a means of escapism." In talking about escapism, Ricky stated that:

I go to the gym, I run, I have to busy myself with stuff instead of being quiet with myself and thinking about life alone and what that is today and what that might look like from now on. So then I go to the gym, I'm always running, I'm always looking

for that next project. I don't know if there's a fear of not being attractive and I've met someone and we're dating and six months later, I'm no longer attractive to him for whatever reason. Do I lose him because I got him because I was looking so good that Friday night the backstreet club, and now six months later, I don't look as good as I used to. I've lost my hair or I'm not as muscular as I was, so I think there's some pressure there to maintain what I have.

Moreover, Ricky talked about fear and the realities of the psychological impact that body image and masculinity has had on the gay community. Ricky talked about "the fear of him going out to see someone else and be with someone else are just some of the things that come to mind right now. But appearance is such a permeating thread of the culture." In addition, the constant need to be attractive is strong in the gay community and extends into even what most gay men wear. Ricky said, "I even know dudes who will spend money for the shoes or the clothing to not wear a repeat outfit." He concluded that, "it's very low self-esteem. If I'm going to this event, I have to look the part, so I spend my very last dime on this pair of True Religion jeans in the hopes of getting attention." Ricky continued to say that "there's possibly a core of low self-esteem that's at the center of all of this that says I'm not happy with myself, so I push myself more, working out, buying the best clothes, spending money with the hope of getting attention somehow. Getting one guy to smile, getting one guy to say you look nice and that just makes your night."

Tommy had a similar experience in regards to body image and masculinity in the gay community. Tommy, who had struggled to define himself as a gay man, experienced immense peer pressure to fit into the mold and perceptions of the gay male lifestyle.

Absolutely there is pressure! I just did an internship in New York City, and I lived next to Greenwich Village, which is their established gay neighborhood, and I felt an overwhelming pressure living there. They had a main drag, Astor Place, and when you walk down that street, everything that's on that street is either a sex shop, a restaurant, or a bar. And when you go to those bars, everything is centered around drug use, alcohol, meth, everything. A lot of the pictures you'd see were of guys with ripped bodies, and a lot of the bars had go-go dancers, and I remember going to a bar and they had spin parties, and you could go in there with just your underwear, contests that you could win money. They have contests that are all centered around sex. It's a totally a body-perfect culture.

In the same way, Tommy talked about the immense pressure to fit into the culture, which included body image, wealth, and being a part of the popular social circles. He went on to say, "Oh, there's also a gym on that street, of course, because people need to look good. I feel like the gay culture is very high fashion. You have to look a certain way. Your body has to be a certain way." In addition, Tommy stated:

There's this hierarchy within the gay community from my experience, and it was a lot of the guys that were really good looking and had a lot of money and dressed nice, and those were the guys everyone aspired to be and those were the guys on the posters and those were the guys you saw walking down the streets in Greenwich Village. Those were the guys that had the best parties that everyone wanted to get into and everyone looked up to, and you feel that pressure.

For Tommy, having been thrust into this experience and not knowing what to expect or what the culture was like, proved to be pretty difficult. Having to navigate his way through this culture took tremendous of energy and the desire to fit into the culture was substantial.

Tommy said:

I was young and I didn't really know anybody, at that time I had moved to New York City for that internship, I knew a couple people but we didn't really know each other. I basically went to New York City not knowing anyone, and I was new to the culture and I had never experienced that culture before because I grew up in a small town. I had never met an openly gay person before and all of a sudden I'm thrust into this community where everything is all in the open and everything is about sex and money and drugs. It was very new and overwhelming to me and I felt pressure to be that person that was expected of me to be in a body-perfect culture. I consider myself to be fit, and guys would approach me in bars and I had never experienced that before. I felt they were really just interested in having sex with me because I looked good to them, and I didn't like that. It was very uncomfortable for me, but because I was new and I wanted to fit in I just went with it to meet new people and go with it.

Tommy, who was very impressionable, young, and just coming to terms with his sexual orientation, felt that he had to fit into a culture that he thought he was supposed to be part of. He started to assimilate into the gay culture, not only through staying physically fit, but also through fashion and the spending of money.

When I first moved to New York City, I did things based on what other people wanted me to do. I went out and bought clothing I could not afford to wear to clubs

and stuff. I used to wear sweatpants and T-shirts, and you can't wear stuff like that to a bar. I went out and bought a lot of the clothes to fit in that way even though I didn't really want to. I would meet guys out there, and I would spend money that I didn't really want to, just buying drinks and buying stuff for other people even though I didn't really want to so I could fit in. Part of it was because I was new; part of it was because of the culture.

Tommy went through an intense struggle, questioning why he was doing the things that he knew were not him. He felt little control over the amount of pressure he felt. Whether it was self-imposed or peer pressure, Tommy was not able to escape that pressure. He said, "It was difficult to manage for myself because I was like why are you doing this, this isn't what you really want to be doing." Tommy indicated that at the same time "the other part of me was like this is what you have to do to fit in, you like living here, this is how it has to be, so you have to mold yourself to fit this." Consequently, "I battled back and forth between listening to those pieces and trying to decide what was good for me. I listened to that voice that was telling me that I had to do all these things to fit in." Lastly, Tommy shared, "I have to work out this many times a day to have a good body so that people will find me sexually attractive, because if people find you sexually attractive they won't have anything to do with you." In the same way, Tommy concluded:

It's definitely a youth centered culture too, so they want you to look healthy. I liked fitness anyway and I like sports, but I can't deny that part of the reason that I like it is that I do it to fit the image what gay men are supposed to look like, which is having those ripped six-pack abs and stuff. I think a lot of my interest is based on getting

that validation from other people outside that find you sexually attractive and that motivates you, like you're getting this validation from them, you look good, keep it up. A lot of my time was spent in the gym working out, and then I'd go out to clubs. I found myself getting into that culture, especially in Greenwich Village. It came to a point where right before I was about to leave, when I knew this isn't me, this isn't what I want, and it was very difficult to listen to that. I would say that the majority of the time I was there, and even now sometimes, I do listen to a lot of what that culture says because that's what you need to do to fit into the culture.

Tommy talked about his desires and what he finds attractive. Tommy's comments exemplify the concerns that many gay men have about maintaining an idealized body image. Tommy found his attractions to a fit body image to be ironic, yet he couldn't deny his own attractions. He goes on to say:

The guys I find attractive are definitely in shape. I like guys who are larger than me, height-wise, muscular, weight, everything. I like guys that are bigger than me. I like guys that are competitive and not overly aggressive, but a little bit aggressive and like to take the lead. I guess those are the guys I'm attracted to and a lot of the times those are the guys that are in the media, in a lot of the magazines who have the ripped bodies and whatever. I have met some of those guys in Greenwich Village and had sexual experiences with some of them, but it was always just based on that, and was never based on anything else, it was just let's have sex and I'm gone.

In addition, Tommy talked about the attractions he had to others and how those attractions just typically led to sex, without much more developing. He expressed that "It's like we just

want to find a guy who is really attractive, hook up with them, and then move on with their lives. That was a huge part of the culture.” In talking about the culture that he experienced in Greenwich Village, Tommy talked about how he was treated frequently while out in the bars with his friends.

I would have guys come up to me in the bars, and take their hand and shove it down my pants and start feeling me or touch my butt or they would reach their hand inside my pants and I would have to pull their hand out or move away. There was so much of that that was going on that I just kind of accepted it for what it was, I guess I became desensitized to it just because it happened so much. I wasn't comfortable with it, I didn't like it, but I figured since I was new that's just how it was, so I put up with it, even though I didn't really want it to be happening. I was thrust into that environment without having any knowledge of what I was about to experience.

In addition to being thrust into an environment that was foreign to Tommy, he also saw how gay popular culture was portrayed in the media. Tommy explained, “I get some of the gay magazines; I get *Instinct*, *Out*, *The Advocate*. If you look through those magazines and you look at the advertisements, there are three general categories.” He named the three categories, “its alcohol and tobacco, its high fashion that no one can afford, or its sex.” He continued to say, “it's guys in their underwear, and it's always beautiful gorgeous men who have perfect bodies, and that's all you see. Everything is revolved around sex and alcohol and expensive clothing. And there's so much pressure because that's all you see.” Furthermore, Tommy said, “when I think about gay culture, that's all I see and that's all I feel and it's impossible to keep up with that.”

The impact that body image and masculinity in the gay community has had on Collin is similar to the impact that they have had on Ricky and Tommy. Collin, whose raw emotions were evident during this interview, had struggled with his body image and masculinity on various levels. In talking about body image and masculinity, he started out by saying:

Oh my god, yes. I'm much more feminine than, I wouldn't say a lot of gay men, but I'm obviously gay because I am more feminine. I think that there's an expectation to have a certain body image. Even in gender portrayal, I think that more masculine men are celebrated and you have to have the perfect body, perfect abs, and it's all about fitness. If you don't, if you're more overweight, people look down on you and exclude you and it's almost like they don't see you as being gay if you don't have this masculine image. I often feel marginalized in the gay community because I don't have that very butch body image.

Collin goes on to talk about the personal and psychological impact his experiences has had on him. In like manner, "I suffer with body dysmorphia. Like I talked about earlier, after that sexual assault, I gained a lot of weight, and then became so insecure about my body." As a result of his body dysmorphia condition, Collin revealed he:

Started working out all the time and I felt like I had to look a certain way, I had to be a certain weight, I had to fit into a certain size pair of jeans because I have a smaller body frame, I have to fit that twink image to have the 28' waist and fit into the skinny jeans. It's crazy, but you're like if I don't have this certain body image then I'm going to be alone and never find anyone, and the gay population is so small anyway

and it's so hard to find other gay men that I have to look perfect so I can attract all these other people.

Coming into his own as a gay male, Collin began to reveal his journey in dealing with body image and where he has found comfort and peace. He talked about the need to look a certain way and to fit into a specific prescribed image, but that in the end, doing that did not really make him happy. Collin revealed:

For me, I've gotten to the point in probably like the last year and a half or so, that I do my own thing and if people don't like the way that I look or the way that I dress, I'm just like fuck you. That's just how I feel. I realize in the past when I tried to be a certain image for people and would try to go after people who I thought were the ideal image, I realized that there was just this vacuous hole in my interactions with them. There was nothing there but that we were both seen as attractive. That was the only connection. I realized there is so much more to personal connections.

Once Collin realized that he wanted to focus on his own personal development, he had a clearer picture of what he valued and what he was looking for. Collin continued on to say that:

It was so shallow and I realized I had to focus on what makes me individual, what makes me me. I got to the point where, I've always been a long distance runner, so it wasn't about, I have to run so many miles to maintain a weight, I did it because I realized it was very calming for me as a stress reliever. And my interests, I love opera, I love listening to National Public Radio, I love going to church. I go to a

Unitarian church, and I have all these quirky interests that aren't part of the gay mainstream and I realized that people didn't want to talk to me about those things, but that's a huge part of who I am. I want to find someone with those interests and friends with those interests and it doesn't matter what they look like. I realized that body image and hanging out with certain gay people because they look a certain way or people perceive them to be a certain way was just making me miserable. It was making me miserable and I was not going to do that anymore.

Even though Ricky, Tommy and Collin all expressed similar insights about body image and masculinity in the gay community, Ivan and Kyle's views were slightly different. Ivan indicated, "I do want to look a certain way, dress in a certain fashion, but it is not particularly because I identify as gay. I don't feel any pressure from the gay community. I don't pay attention to trends within the gay community." Ivan also expresses the simple need to just look good and respectable. He contends, "It's like I want to make sure the color of my shirt matches the pants that I wear, but that's about it." He also acknowledges, "I try different hairstyles from time to time, going from short to long, but that is not because I'm trying to fit into the gay stereotype, if you will. It's just about wanting to look presentable."

In addition, Ivan talked about his perceptions of masculinity and how he relates them to the gay culture. He contends:

I see a lot of variety. Some people can be the macho butch type gays to the other extreme feminine people. I don't think those who are very masculine feel compelled to dress up in a more feminine way, or act like that. If anything, I think there would be a pressure to be more masculine. It will be completely understandable if someone

wanted to work out or get in better shape. Then people question what is masculine or feminine. Doing your eyebrows or something like that is not considered masculine, but I do my eyebrows because if I didn't, I would have these bushy eyebrows. So I don't know how much of it is being gay, per se, or being masculine.

The way that Kyle approached the issues of body image and masculinity in the gay community seemed a bit more open in nature. Kyle said that "ideally, obviously you would want an awesome body, someone who's beautiful and in shape and everything, but in reality, that doesn't happen all the time." He talked about a guy that he met for the purposes of sex. He stated that:

This one guy that I'm talking about, he was overweight and he smokes, so he smells like cigarettes, and I don't like that, but it was still fun to have sex with him, and I think there is a certain amount of being game to have sex with somebody because I'm not everyone's ideal type or age either, and so I think if that were a really important factor, I wouldn't be having very much sex with any men, just because not everybody has the ideal body type. For me personally, it's desirable but it's not critical.

In reflecting on his own actions and motivation in regards to body image, Kyle concluded, "I do think that probably most of my motivation not to care and not eat what I want and put on a ton of weight is because of me wanting to fit into that ideal body image." He concluded, "I don't work out, so I'm not muscular, but I am slender and I think that's a desirable quality in the gay community to not be overweight." Kyle also talked about how unpleasant it is to not eat the foods that he likes all the time, but he is motivated by others and how good they look

to him. Kyle reflected on an experience that he had which clarified what he was attracted to and desired physically in other guys. Kyle stated that:

It's not fun to abstain from caloric foods and eat healthy stuff all the time, and I do indulge and eat chocolate and stuff, but it fuels the motivation. Some of that is not just to be a part of the gay community but I find that many people that I'm attracted to have very low body mass index. I remember when I was at BYU, and I was walking somewhere, and there was a guy who was training to throw a discus, and he was just wearing shorts and shoes. But you could see every muscle in his body ripple, and I was very attracted to that. I find that's the porn I find most appealing, that has people who are slender. Even if they're not super muscular, but if they don't have a lot of body fat, that's what appeals to me.

Some of the participants had specific things to say about masculinity and the impact it had on their lives as part of the gay community. Participants shared varying, but insightful perspectives that should make anyone who is part of the gay community to stop and think about their own masculinity and the impact it has on their lives. Ricky, for example, was intensely aware of his masculinity and what that meant for him. In addition, Ricky also was very sensitive to others whose masculinity was degraded, simply because they were perceived as being more feminine in nature. For example, Ricky said that "I think that it has a pretty important role in the gay community because a lot of men that I know just in general, are gay and will tell you that they're gay, but they're not necessarily acting like a woman, whatever that means." Similarly, he concluded, "not to say that they're ready to do a drag

show or put on a dress or anything, but I think it plays an important role because there is this definition of what masculinity looks like, acts like, etc.”

Ricky also talked about the gay culture and the impact on gay men. For example, Ricky expressed that:

It’s the influence that it has on the culture. We are compared to this picture of masculinity. Some of us might be that picture, some of us might strive toward it, some of us might resist it, so that might be the role or the influence that masculinity has on the gay community and how we engage with each other. Gay is a subculture, but there’s a subculture to that, like a sub subculture where girly gay boys hang together, masculine gay boys hang together. You hardly ever see an overlap. Just like at dinner, if it’s eight gay men, they kind of, I say this cautiously, will look alike. You’re hardly ever going to have this mix of really feminine boy from the left and this really masculine man and they’re all just hanging out.

Ricky also brought up an interesting perspective of there being a divide in the gay culture. This divide centered about masculinity and self-segregation along the lines of perceived masculinity among peer groups. He said:

I think that this definition of socially how we’ve talked about masculinity has created some divide within the gay culture because there is this separation of you’re just a little bit too gay, I might fuck you and trick with you, but we can’t walk through the mall together because I’m a butch man, and I’m walking with you, everyone is going to call me out and ask why is Steve hanging out with the gay boy. So Steve will hang

out with the gay boy in a private spot, if it's at a house party, but to take the risk of publicly, that's the role masculinity has come to play in the gay community. We use it somewhat as a tool to divide us or as a framework for how we're supposed to act, despite who you sleep with.

Ricky found himself in a situation where he felt compelled to speak out against the divide that he perceives is in the gay community concerning masculinity. His example was:

I can think of a story where I was at dinner with four people, one hetero girl and the three of us gay men, and one of the guys talked about after seeing two really girly boys walking down the street, that he had such a disdain for that, how it was disgusting. And I was angered by that. We engaged in a pretty intense conversation around how that statement has created such a divide between us. He is younger and trying to find his identity and it was definitely this notion of almost as if, just call him a faggot, but you're gay too. What is happening here? You'll sleep with a boy just like he will, but for some reason you're judging him. You're oppressing him like heteros oppress us as a whole. That's not the first, it's one of many stories centered around the ways in which even gay men saying that we're supposed to act masculine.

On the flip side, Ricky did acknowledge that he is attracted to men who are masculine. In talking about what he liked, he mentioned:

It's kind of broad because I would say that most of us are masculine. Some might have just a greater dose of femininity in some aspects in their behavior or tone of voice, that might be perceived as feminine. All of these are constructive, so I'm

trying not to make them definite terms. To me, when I say I'm looking for, or I'm more attracted to a man that's masculine, that might be the one who you would have to really know that he's gay. He would have to tell you, or you would have to see him in a gay club, which doesn't necessarily mean that he's gay but you would need some confirmation that he's a gay man. It's not so much what he does, like he loves to watch sports or drives a pick-up truck. Those things are not it, though I kind of like that too. But more about how he handles himself and what socially would be seen as a masculine way, that's attractive to me.

Collin, who saw himself as being more feminine in nature, talked very candidly about the issue of masculinity and how he has come to view masculinity in the gay community. "I've come to the point where I'm just unabashedly myself. I am who I am. Love me or leave me. And I've gotten to the point where I'm unconsciously myself, my flamboyant self, and I'm comfortable with it, and I think it makes other people more comfortable with it." Collin went on to talk about how he feels gay men who are not out may feel in his presence. For example, Collin indicated, "I think to some extent the more closeted masculine gay men, I make them so uncomfortable because they think I'm drawing attention to them." In addition, he indicated that others may feel that, "I'm making the gay community look bad, like why do you have to act that way, you're the reason people don't like the gays. You, with your swishiness, and your wrist flipping and your snaps. I think it's really interesting."

Collin acknowledged that he does not appreciate masculine guys, because he felt that some of them are not really being who they are. Collin revealed:

I have a lot of resentment toward the hyper masculine gay male population who are somewhat closeted, because I'm like get the fuck over yourself, you think you're some big badass man, but you hide in your closet and you hide behind your passing privilege and you don't have the balls to stand up and say I'm queer and be in someone's face about it. I always feel like I'm more of "man" than they are, because if someone harasses me, I'll get in their face and queen out. I'll rip my panties off and wrap them around their face. I will get in your face, like fuck you. I see so many of the hyper masculine men who pass not being able to do that, because it's so much easier to allow, well people think I'm straight so I don't have to say anything. I have a lot of resentment toward that part of the community, and I think that's why so many of my friends are as equally queenie and flamboyant as I am.

In addition, Collin talked about some of his masculine friends and how some of them envy the fact that he can be so out about his sexuality and the impact this has on them. He stated, "I also have some masculine friends who say they envy that experience that I have. They have to constantly out themselves, and for them it becomes more of an internal struggle." Collin proudly declared during this interview, "I am okay with who I am on the inside as a gay man, I do not struggle with that at all. What I struggle with is the harassment and how other people treat me." He went on to say, "they don't have to worry about how other people treat them because they treat them as a straight man. Their struggle is on the inside. Equally as hard, just different."

Ricky and Collin both expressed their passion and thoughts in regards to masculinity, however Ivan and Kyle had more modest perceptions about masculinity and the impact it has

on the gay community. Ivan noted that, “according to a lot of people I know, I come off as very straight acting. Most of the people I came out to were surprised.” Furthermore, “they used to think I was straight. I’m a good actor, I don’t know. I think I’m pretty masculine, but not extremely though, with my smaller shape.” Ivan went on to talk about masculinity and shared his specific ideas of what masculinity and femininity looked like as a member of the gay community. For example, Ivan expressed, “extreme masculinity would be really tall, taller than 6’2”, big broad frame, always dressed more formal, like a clearly defined area. The hairstyle would be shorter hair, and not using any hair colors that aren’t as natural, like blues and reds.” Moreover, “extreme femininity I would say might be really lean built, could be the choice of colors or clothing, skin tight jeans, too many piercings, like the nose, and product in the hair.”

Kyle discussed his perceptions of masculinity and how he negotiates them as part of the tricking encounter in the gay community. Kyle concluded that:

I think when you’re only hooking up and having sex with somebody, it doesn’t matter, and it hasn’t mattered with me. But I think when I was still in the closet a little more, I’ve never been totally in the closet, I think I generally preferred people who weren’t flaming fags or people who were just very obviously gay. I think I personally still prefer when I associate with new people that they don’t take on a hyper flamboyant attitude. I don’t really have a problem with that anymore I guess, but a couple people I considered dating weren’t super masculine, but they weren’t on the really flamboyantly gay side of the spectrum either. They were probably more like me, a bit ambiguous, like is this guy straight or not.

Kyle also discussed his general take on masculinity as a member of the gay community. He stated that:

I think there's more flexibility in the gay community than there is in the straight world to be who you are. I personally haven't noticed that there's like a script in the gay community that men are expected to be masculine or expected to be feminine or whatever. I think it's a personal decision how you present yourself to the world and who you want to date. I have met some gay men that are really masculine and you'd never guess that they're gay, and I've met some guys who are very out. I think in the gay community, that's okay. Who you want to date is personal preference. I think guys who are more masculine tend to look for guys who are more on their end of the masculinity spectrum, and that's probably true anywhere along the spectrum, so if somebody's very flamboyant, I'm struggling to find the right word for that gay personality type, but they'll usually look for someone with that same personality type.

Tricking Encounters and Sexual Health

"...if I trick with you, I don't have to get personal. I don't have to tell you about my health, or am I HIV positive or not. I'm just going to sleep with you and walk away." – Ricky

Tricking is very real in the gay community. Just as salient, is tricking by gay male college students. There is a void in the literature focusing on the sexual risk behaviors of gay male college students, whereas the current research focuses on heterosexual college students. The participants in this study talked about their experiences and motivations of their tricking encounters. Tommy said, "a lot of the guys that I've met online, we've never sustained a

relationship, but we would hook up, whether that would be, well there's a couple different definitions of hooking up." Whereby, "some people view it as kissing, others as oral sex, and others as actual anal intercourse or anything like that." Given the various definitions that Tommy stated, he indicated that "I've had all three of those experiences with guys that I've met online."

Acknowledging these encounters that he had with men offline, Tommy went on to talk about his most recent experience, which took place during his internship. Tommy said "my most recent one was in New York because I lived there for my internship for six months before coming back to school. I had met up with this person during the Pride festival and we hooked up. That was at the end of June, and then I moved here. I haven't hooked up with anybody since I've been here. That was probably my last experience." In addition, Tommy went into more details about that encounter. Tommy said that:

We had met online and talking and we were both going to the Pride festival, so we just met up on the street and hung out during that day, and he was staying with one of his friends that lived in New York, so at night after we had gotten back from the bars, I went to his place and we had anal sex. He was the insertive partner, and I was the receptive partner. We also had oral sex too. Also, we took a shower together before we had sex. That was after the bar time, so it was pretty early in the morning. Then in the morning, we woke up and talked for a little bit and then I left because I had to go back home. It was kind of just like meet, talk, and hook up. I think we both knew we were both just interested in that, and that was what we both wanted. I think we

went into it with the understanding that was what it was going to be. I woke up and moved on.

This experience for Tommy was not just about sex, but it was also about embracing and encouraging a conversation that discussed sexual health safety and what that meant for them both. When talking about sexual health before this encounter took place, Tommy said that “I felt pretty much in control. As soon as I got there, he’d already had protection out, lubricant and condoms there, and that was always a big thing, to make sure that we use that.” Tommy went on to say that they both shared their past experiences being sexually active. He said that “we had talked before about what his experience was and mine, and when he had been tested. You never really know 100%, but we did have that conversation.” Moreover, Tommy went on to say:

Whether he was telling the truth or not, I don’t know, but we did have the conversation, and I definitely made sure that he always used protection and that he didn’t ejaculate inside me. He actually pulled out and I gave him head, because that’s a big thing for me that he not ejaculate inside me.

In reflecting about this experience, Tommy talked about his expectations of the experience and the psychological impact of his other previous experiences, which impacted the decisions that he made. The very first tricking encounter that Tommy engaged in still had an impact on him. Tommy said:

After that first experience, I set up things and told myself you’re smarter than this, and I recognized in myself that pressure that I was coming to, and I still wanted to

experience that and be intimate with guys, but I had to protect myself as much as I can. So I set up certain things in place. I made sure the person always had protection and didn't ejaculate inside of me and would always use plenty of lubricant, and to always make sure that we talked about his status. I wanted to make sure we had that conversation. I set those things up after that first experience since I'd had so much guilt and anxiety for future experiences. I still know that it's risky and I still have some anxiety from it afterward a bit, but not as much as from that first experience. It's difficult when you want to be intimate with somebody, but that emotional connection part, it was just too overwhelming for me at the time and I couldn't handle it, so this was the avenue I found to satisfy my sexual needs.

Tommy continued by talking about his most current experience. He said, "I had certain expectations going into it that we had talked about to protect myself somewhat. Anytime you engage in something like that, there are going to be risks, even with the precautions that I'm taking, and I'm aware of that." In addition, Tommy talked about the psychological impact these experiences have had on his life. Tommy expressed, "I think it can be hard too though because, especially for me, because I had built up all this sexual tension in my life and hadn't ever been able to be intimate with a guy before." He concluded, "I had seen all my friends doing it and I wanted that." He continues with talking about his very first sexual encounter with another male:

When the opportunity comes about, you want to just jump in. The first encounter that I had, that's what I did, I jumped into it and I know the person didn't use protection the whole time. That created a lot of anxiety for me at the time until I got tested, and

it was really scary. I think that pressure and the feeling that I had, and I had studied that as a health major, so that fed into the anxiety I had built up, because I was more educated than a lot of the population, but I still succumb to that pressure that I teach people about. So I had a lot of guilt about that because I had talked about it so much.

The pressure that I felt was so intense in the moment, and we were out at the bars too.

Tommy goes on to talk about his actions at the bar and his thoughts on what may have contributed to this experience. He said, "I had only had a couple drinks, and I still felt kind of in control, but your inhibitions are still lowered. I wouldn't consider myself super drunk or anything, but the alcohol may have played a part of that too. The pressure that I felt and the desire to be intimate was really overwhelming and looking back I thought, what have I done, but I wasn't really thinking at the time."

Collin talked about his tricking encounters and his varied reactions to them. His first experience, which was facilitated by the use of Grindr, ended in a very surprising way.

Collin had been chatting to someone from Grindr and decided to meet. Collin said:

I invited someone over to my apartment from Grindr and we had been texting for a while with the intent to hook up. When he got there, I just couldn't do it. We started making out and then I just stopped and said I can't do this. I was pretty sure he was drunk and had driven intoxicated to my apartment, and I was just really uncomfortable with the whole thing. I didn't know him that well. For all I know, his name could have been a pseudonym, it could have been a fake name. I didn't know much about him or his sexual history, so I don't know if that was why I stopped. I wanted to try to do it because some of my friends had done that, and it was fine and

they were nonchalant about it. They didn't think twice about it. I don't know if it was judgmental or afraid to have those experiences, so I was like I'll try, but I couldn't do it. It just scared me for some reason. I just associated the experience to being promiscuous, and I had negative experiences with a friend who became HIV positive at a young age, right as we were graduating high school, and I knew that he was very promiscuous, so I always had that thought at the back of my mind all the time and I associated those things.

However, Collin did talk about an experience that he had with someone that was not a complete stranger to him and what happened during that sexual encounter. He stated, "it's interesting, because one of my friends that I randomly had sex with was one of my fraternity brothers and was actually my little brother in the fraternity." Being his fraternity brother, Collin indicated, "we had a rapport and we actually lived together, he was my suite mate when I was an RA." Having this prior relationship, Collin acknowledged, "there had always been sexual tension between us. He would always flirt with me and would be suggestive. We shared a shower. We had our own separate rooms, but a bathroom separated our bedrooms in the residence hall." Sharing such close quarters with his fraternity brother who was also bi, Collin admitted, "there were always suggestive things said between us and we were both really drunk the first time it happened. We started having sex. It was one of the few times when I've had unprotected sex." In having this unprotected sexual encounter with his fraternity brother and suitemate, Collin said that "I trusted him and I was really naïve. In the middle of it I had to stop and say I can't do this." Collin tried to make sense of why he stopped in the middle of having this encounter and thought that:

I don't know if I was afraid of like the disease aspect, but it just didn't feel right, like I shouldn't be doing it for some reason. So it was confusion, like why am I not doing this? I knew that I wanted to, but it was why am I stopping myself? Is it moral reasons? Is it fear? It was just this internalized fear of my friend becoming HIV positive so young, which was interesting, because we had unprotected sex. I had unprotected sex with a few people, which is really unsafe. So when it happens, I feel like I've built a level of trust with them. I think why it happens with some friends incidentally is because I feel comfortable with them. I feel like I have a relationship with them beyond the physical component, so it feels safe that these things happen on occasion.

Collin started to reflect on his tricking encounters and the impact these experiences have had on his life. He observed, "obviously, they're pleasurable. I think that they were really instrumental in me experimenting with who I was with my gay identity, because I came out at such a young age." Collin and the person that he was dating were able to come out at the same time to their families at the same time; hence the shared experience was special to him. He stated, "when I came out, I came out with someone else and we were dating, and we dated for two years, and we broke up after my freshman year in college." As a result of the breakup, Collin indicated, "after that I kind of went crazy and I hooked up with a lot of people, fooling around with them, practically anything but anal sex." Collin continued by saying that:

I think it's really funny. I think I make excuses for myself and I say I'm friends with them, but I'm such the socialite, I know all the gays in my hometown. So it's like I

know them, I have a rapport with them, so it's not that bad and I always justify it. I always put myself in uncomfortable situations for some reason. But all of those negative experiences that I had helped me realize that I was uncomfortable with those situations.

Taking those situations into account, Collin also struggled with his the attention and perceptions from others in his hometown. "Where I grew up and where I come from, it's like oh the pretty boy, the pretty little gay boy, and a lot of people had this preconceived notion because of the way I looked, like that I would sleep with anyone. So I had to put up this image of I don't do that." This psychologically impacted Collin, hence he:

Felt like when someone would approach me, that would be the only reason that they'd approach me, and so hooking up helped me explore my emotions about casual sex, and it helped me realize that I am really uncomfortable with it because I get so emotionally attached to the person, and it was important for me to know I needed a certain level of trust with the person.

As Collin continued to tell his story, his emotions became stronger and stronger. He stated, "the first person that I ever fooled around with, after the first person I lost my virginity to, was five years older than me and I think he took advantage of me and I didn't want to do that." Collin continued:

We didn't have sex, but he forced me to have oral sex and all these other things, and that was a really hard experience for me. And that was my first experience after the person I fell in love with and lost my virginity to, and came out with, and spent the

first two years of being out with, so I was really naive because I dated my first boyfriend for two years, and we were together for six months before we had sex because I wanted to be sure that you're the right person, because this is really important for me. I guess I took that baggage from being sexually assaulted into other experiences.

The experience of being sexually assaulted caused confusion for Collin, especially in regards to sexual encounters. Collin stated, "I was so confused because I saw all my other friends doing these things and for them it was like nothing, but for me it brought back so many of those emotions and fear and I felt like it was my fault." Collin was surrounded by friends who tricked on many occasions, but who had very different experiences than he did. Collin said:

I wanted to try to do those things, and I wanted to explore that within the comfort of a friendship to help me figure out it wasn't my fault and I really needed that comfort. After that, I never heard from him again. And that was hard because that was my first after my relationship, and after that I became so guarded of my body and I gained a lot of weight after that, and it was really rough for me to deal with that. I didn't want anyone to look at me, I didn't want to be the pretty little boy anymore because I didn't want them to have those same thoughts and same motives to want to get to know me. The experiences of hooking up with my friends provided me the exploration that a lot of people need but in a comfortable zone.

In addition to revealing his sexual assault, Collin also talked about his past intimate relationships and some of the consequences of those relationships. Collin talked about being

cheated on by both of his past partners and the physical and psychological issues he struggles with as a result. Collin said, "I feel like I rush into physical interaction with people that I'm romantically interested with too soon." Furthermore, "I've not really dated that many people. Both times that I became very romantically involved with someone very quickly and sexually involved with them, I got an STD from both of those people." In addition, Collin said:

One of the times was because they cheated on me. Actually they both cheated on me. Because I view having sex and physical intimacy as very important and so meaningful, I felt that if I did this with them, then they would have the same emotions about that physical intimacy, and clearly those people didn't. It altered my perception of my relationship with other people as being much more mutually invested than it actually was, and those are some negatives. It just skewed my perception of my relationships with other people, and made a few of my friendships very awkward.

In addition to struggling with emotionally connecting with others sexually, he also struggled with contracting STD's from his unfaithful partners. He revealed:

The last time that I contracted an STD was this past year, and I was diagnosed with it this past January. It's a skin virus called Molluscum contagiosum and it's very common. You can get it from the gym, you can get it from playing sports in close physical contact. So I just associate that I got it from the last man that I was involved with that cheated on me, but I felt so stigmatized by it. I felt so dirty. I just recently got rid of it because it takes months and months of treatments, really painful treatments, they have to freeze the little chicken pox like things, and it's just really shameful. You think, what are people going to think about me?

Having a different experience than Collin, Ivan talked about his experiences and comfort zone with tricking and what that usually looks like for him. He had an interesting perspective that sounded similar to the perspectives of others in this study. In talking about what he is usually looking for in tricking encounters, Ivan stated that:

Sometimes I am looking for sex, so I don't care whether or not I am committed to the person or not. So it is just like being horny one day and finding someone to hook up. That is what leads to tricking I guess. That the expectations are really low, so people don't feel invested too much, so it's easier to meet someone just for that. The moment it starts looking bigger, looking for a relationship or something, people tend to be more reserved and less likely to open up or give you a chance to meet with you. They find it more comfortable to meet with this one specific goal, no questions asked.

The last tricking encounter for Ivan was actually with someone that he knew and referred to as a friend. He said that he knows this friend "from school. We had not seen each other for a few weeks. I stopped by his office and we decided to meet later in the evening at my place." Consequently, Ivan noted, "not with the objective of doing something sexual, but he visited me and then eventually just ended up having oral sex. It lasted about an hour or so." Ivan talked about how he met his friend. We met "through school. There was a workshop and he was there. We hit it off and became friends; we've known each other for about 10 months now." Ivan proceeded to talk about his standards when it comes to sexual encounters. He stated that "I like to think that I'm versatile, so I'll try anything. For me, the standards are set, so it has to be safe. If not, then I'm sorry. It has to be safe sex for me." Moreover, "so there is nothing that would make me be more lenient or flexible with that." Additionally,

Ivan talked about another tricking encounter that he had and that the guy admitted to not always using protection. Ivan recalled:

I have come across the sentiment where people tend to overlook the seriousness of the issue of protecting yourself, like undergraduate students. There was this guy that I hooked up with, and I talk to people while I'm having sex with them. I asked him about his safe sex practices, and he said 'Well it depends; sometimes we just don't use protection.' I gave him a strange look at that and was like; you're not supposed to do that. It depends on how seriously people take it.

Kyle also talked about his last tricking encounters and the other attempted encounters that he had planned or was invited to. He talked about his experience meeting someone through Grindr. He said, "well, we had communicated for a couple days on and off, on Grindr and then through texting before we actually got together." Additionally, "we did have sex the first time that we met. Also, when we connected on Grindr the last time, within minutes he came over to my place and we played around again. We've met about 4 times so far." Kyle talked about this guy not being his type of guy, but he had enough qualities that he liked. He said, "in some ways he is my type and other ways he's not. He's younger than me. He's legal, but he's younger." Equally important for Kyle, he was "blonde, blue eyes, and had red lips, and I liked his arms. They were really tan and the hair was this blonde fuzz. I like his arms a lot."

Kyle also shared his thoughts in retrospect of what he is seeking now in his life. He talked about the fact that tricking is less frequent for him and that he is more interested in developing relationships and friendships. He said:

I would say just that as I've gotten older, my experience with hooking up with people generally has changed. It has become less frequent, for one. Two, I have been more interested in establishing relationships and friendships. I'm not interested in dating because I'm married, so the people that I have had sex with more recently have been people that I've met in a more natural setting rather than online.

Kyle goes on to talk about meeting other guys and the things that he has been involved in because of those relationships. "I went to a sex party with some guy that I met through a LGBTSS meeting." He said, "we didn't connect online or anything, he just let me know about this sex party, and it was fun, he and I both were able to hook up with other guys at that party and enjoyed ourselves." In addition, "there was at least 30 guys there, with a big hot tub." Kyle went on to talk about the party having a spread of food and beverages for everyone to enjoy and how liberating it felt for him to walk around in the nude and enjoy sexual experiences with other guys and not feel as though he would be judged for that. Kyle reiterated this by saying, "I hooked up with somebody that I met through other more natural settings at Iowa State. I met one individual through a diversity summit, and met another through other things dealing with diversity on campus, and I've just made friends." Kyle continues to say that "my point is that the sexual experiences that I've had more recently have been not through the Internet. And I like that. It feels good to me." He continued: "It feels kind of like, not that there's anything wrong with hooking up with people on the Internet, but it feels better to me to do it that way." In addition, Kyle talked about another experience that he had in which an sexual encounter took place. He stated:

It was in the spring sometime, last semester. He really was initiating that. I went to his house once and I think he was expecting, and I didn't have time to stay and play around, and I wasn't in the mood anyway. The second time I went over, I figured that's really what would be happening, but he really did all the initiation of all that. And if he just wanted to show me his lentils, I would have left happy that I just visited a friend. But he wanted to play around. We did oral for a while.

Kyle's sexual experiences and exposure to various avenues of sexual encounters were far more extensive than the experiences of other participants in this study. Kyle, not only provided his contextual historical experiences of his sexual encounters, but he also talked about some of the tricking encounters that he has attempted to have or had done while a college student. While on a conference visit in another state, Kyle talked about flying into a major city and making plans to visit one of the gay bathhouses. He also talked about visiting professional conferences and hooking up with other gay men at the conferences. In addition, Kyle also talked about some of the subcultural methods that some gay college men have participated in to engage in a tricking encounter. He stated, "in the library sometimes in the bathroom stalls, you'll see things about meet me here at this time or whatever, when I was at another university, there was definitely a bathroom in the library with glory holes with people there a lot." Kyle continues by saying that "it was pretty much guaranteed that if you wanted to get a blowjob or blow somebody, you'd go there and find somebody."

Furthermore, Kyle expressed his desire to have similar places like that on his current campus. He stated that "I kind of wish that there was a place like that on campus, but I

haven't found anything like that." He also talked about an experience that he had in one of the public showers here on campus. Kyle said:

One thing I do know about is Beyer Hall has some showers that are open and I did meet somebody from gay.com once that initially met me there at the shower because that was his thing. That's what turned him on. He wanted to first have us stroke each other as we had a shower, and after that we walked to his car and he drove me to his house. I think Beyer Hall is an athletic place where people get naked and have showers, so it's kind of conducive to...I don't know how much playing around goes on there.

With Kyle's openness to experiencing various tricking encounters, he did express his uneasiness with participating in certain adult businesses. He stated:

I know there are a couple adult bookstores downtown, one is Temptations, I think. That's Entertainment is one of them and I can't remember the other one, and I've never been into those because going into an adult bookstore just feels more skanky to me. I think I am more concerned about having an encounter with someone who would have an STD than I would meeting someone in a different circumstance. I don't know if that's warranted or not.

Kyle and Ricky both shared the opinion of what they are looking for and not being afraid to make that known. Ricky, talked about what turns him on and the excitement that comes along with not knowing or seeing everything sexual about the person at the beginning. Ricky

talked about using adam4adam and his profile and what he likes to look for in the profiles of others and how that leads to him meeting them for tricking encounters. Ricky stated:

I am clothed in my pictures and I always have been, even if I change them. I think that for me, my perception is if I disrobe and I'm naked and I'm showing my ass or my dick or my chest, I think that says I'm ready to hook up, I'm ready to fuck now versus even the option of possibly getting to know someone and having a relationship. That to me is incongruent with my profile. If it's all about licking my body parts and let's get it on, then there's no real conversation about getting to know each other.

Ricky goes on to talk about the excitement of meeting someone and being able to see them naked for the very first time, especially when they have not revealed nude photos of themselves while chatting online. He said, "the other motive behind that for me is that I like the surprise." In the say way, "to me, if I'm able to undress him, even if a man does have a wonderful body and you can see that through the clothing, I like to take the clothes off. To me that's like Christmas." Ricky continues describing how this makes him feel, "if he's showing me pictures already, that could be attractive." Rather, "to me it's a little bit anticlimactic when I get him to my place because I've already seen this, and that's great and I'm touching it and feeling it is a different thing, but I like the surprise." In addition, Ricky talked about his expectations when chatting with men whom he is about to meet:

I also like idea that the person that I'm online with isn't necessarily about the hook up, the fuck. There are some days I don't feel that. So if that's what you're giving me, your body, and the phone call is all about what we're going to do when we're

together, that might turn me off a little bit. As much as we both might know that you're coming to my house at 1:00 in the morning, we kind of know. We're grown ass men and we kind of know what's going to happen, right? We're not coming over to drink coffee and watch movies at 1. We can do that tomorrow.

Ricky continued, "I think it's clear, but I guess I just like the idea of this notion of I am interested in knowing who you are." Furthermore, "I think in so doing, I enjoy the sex more versus I don't even know who you are." In addition, he concluded, "I know nothing about you and you sent the email that said I'm coming over in an hour to fuck and I'm gone two hours later. At least there's some connection that is deeper than the physical." Having a connection that is deeper than physical is one factor that really draws Ricky to a potential partner or tricking encounter. Ricky talked in detail about just such an experience. He was at a club with some of his friends and caught the attention of another guy. He described him saying, "his physical appearance was great. Physically he was what I like, taller and very masculine." In the same way, "he had a very masculine persona that was unassuming. Outside of this club, even with my gaydar which I think is on point most of the time, I probably would have missed this. That's attractive to me." Ricky expressed:

I like rugged, manly men, and he was that. That was the initial visual, but as we started to talk, he was engaging, asked questions about me, and actually gave me his real name and his nickname, which was kind of different. In a gay club, you might get anything. We're talking and because the music was loud, I said can we go outside so I can hear you better, and he said sure. So we went outside and talked some more, still not even alluding to sex, but I'm thinking could it happen, I want it to happen,

but maybe not, because this could be a relationship kind of dude. It was a comfortable conversation.

As an illustration, Ricky talked about the culture that had been established within his social circle. He stated, “I was with friends, which is an interesting thing because we’re all okay with each other doing that. It’s a part of the culture, and that’s a little bit disappointing, because any of us could have tricked or hooked up for the night.” Ricky talked about the culture within his friendship circle and the ways that they let each other know what is doing on. He stated, “we all kind of do it, where we might go together, but someone might leave with someone else. That’s basically what happened with me.” In addition, he concluded, “we talked and the club closed so as my friends are calling me, and I’m with ol’ boy, and that’s code.” Ricky explained that “I’m with ol’ boy” was code for wanting to be left alone and in private with a new person. Ricky stated:

So I asked him to take me home, and he said sure. I got in the car with him and he takes me back to where I’m staying, and we’re still talking, and the conversation is as if we’re both interested in a relationship, and still no one has said anything about sex or any of that, which is different because at this point we’ve talked in the club and talked on the sidewalk, we walked to his Jeep and the drive back, so probably about an hour together and no one has mentioned this. I’m liking it. I would like to not be ho-ish. But I do. So we’re talking outside of the building, and I kiss him.

Ricky wanted to take a bit of time to explain the sexual roles that he typically plays and what that meant in this situation. Ricky stated, “with this man, he is clearly a manly man, which is what I’m attracted to, so I guess in our gay vernacular, we would call him a top. So then I

was the passive bottom in this scenario, but we didn't go all the way." He went on to say that "we didn't go to intercourse because we are in a Jeep, but people have done it in a Jeep before. In this scenario, we just kind of messed around, but still a trick. There was no need necessarily for protection because we weren't going that far."

Ricky talked about his expectations regarding protecting himself from STDs. He also talked about the tricking culture and how the use of protection and conversations about sexual health can be like walking on a thin egg shell. Ricky stated:

Most cases I always do use protection. The only times that I haven't have been when I was in those two relationships and we've gone through the we need to go together, let's find out what's going on before we even try to talk about this, because unfortunately, boys don't tell like they should, which might be why people would be more likely to do this tricking. I think it promotes tricking a little bit, because if I trick with you, I don't have to get personal. I don't have to tell you about my health, or am I HIV positive or not. I'm just going to sleep with you and walk away.

To expand upon his view about tricking, Ricky highlighted commitment issues in the gay community. He talked about being in a social circle, where everyone is black, very attractive, yet still single. He also talked about the man that he had met and his reaction to their tricking encounter saying:

I've talked about that a little bit with some friends, like why in this gay culture, I don't know if it's the same for white or other races, but we're all black, so we all talked about why is it that we trick, we choose to trick as attractive men who probably

could be in relationships, but we choose to trick, and are so difficult to get someone to commit, what is that about? That's where we were. With this guy, we've had conversations since, which is different, but I think it speaks to how it started with us, because it didn't start as sex, and he said after we were finishing messing around, he was like wow, I didn't really expect to do that, but he was okay with it. But he seemed to be more interested in getting to know me, but boy's got game. I don't know, it could just be his front.

Personal Safety

"I reason that they have as much need to put trust in me as I do in them, so they could never know if I'm toting a gun and bringing it to a hooking up experience, so I grant the trust that I guess I feel like I'm also being given"--Kyle

When meeting complete strangers, personal safety is something that the participants had considered, yet approach in very different ways. In addition, each participant provided their own philosophy in terms of their personal safety, which is reflected in how they have met people. Ivan indicated that due to his geographical location and the city that he lived in, that he felt safe. He said, "I don't think I really do anything, because I assume that Ames is a pretty safe place and not many bad things happen here. So nothing in particular." In addition, Ivan talked about letting a friend know that he is meeting someone. He goes on to say that:

Sometimes I let a friend of mine know that I'm going to meet a stranger, and I would like a call just to check on things. Other times, I request to meet in a public place or engage them in a conversation and get to know more about them and get a feel for things. A lot of times it is easy to eliminate any chances of risk by just getting to know what they do, if they're a student then it's probably not as risky.

Similarly, Kyle was fairly unassuming when meeting strangers. Kyle acknowledged that he could do more, but trusts that both he and the stranger are there for the same reasons. Kyle admitted, "I could do a lot more. I know women who are planning to meet somebody from the Internet that they haven't met before, they're really encouraged to let a friend know." He continued, "I haven't done that, and part of it is because I haven't ever felt in danger, and an issue of being embarrassed." Admitting the potential embarrassment that he may feel from letting a friend know what he plans to do, Kyle stated:

I have friends that I could call and say I'm going to hook up with somebody, if I don't call you in two hours, text or call me, but I've never done that. Usually I met with someone at my own office because I don't like to travel, or I'll meet with them on their own space if they have a place where they can host. I reason that they have as much need to put trust in me as I do in them, so they could never know if I'm toting a gun and bringing it to a hooking up experience, so I grant the trust that I guess I feel like I'm also being given.

Kyle also spoke about the methods that he has used to protect himself when chatting to people online. "I only provide very basic information on the profiles that are publicly available, like my age, zip code and photo that generally obscures my face or is just my

body.” In addition to not providing personal information about himself online, Kyle indicated that he follows the general culture of chatting online. He said, “I do what most other people do on those websites, only give as much information to entice somebody to start talking to them, and you can provide more information once you’re chatting one on one, like your address and phone number.” He also expressed that “none of that stuff, address or phone number, do I have on a permanent profile that can be accessed at any time.”

Ricky’s approach to his personal safety was not very different from that of Kyle or Ivan. However, Ricky talked about using his intuition in making decisions to meet people. In addition, he also talked about instances when he and his friends would be asked to call and check on them the next morning to make sure that they were okay. Ricky confessed, “I’m not always as smart as I should be on that; I struggle with being private and not necessarily wanting people to know that I’m tricking tonight, but I will let some close friends know if they’re in the vicinity.” In addition, in using his intuition, Ricky explained that:

Occasionally if there has been a reservation, I don’t follow through. I’m like, you sound like you might be crazy. We’re going to end this conversation. Even if it’s email, text, phone, if I get the sense that you might be a little cuckoo, then it’s forget it. There have been occasions where for my own personal safety, I will call one of my sister girls....aka gay man....to say, especially if I’m going to his house, which might be why I tell someone. If I’m going to his house, I might send a text to one of my girls and say this is where I’m going, this is what’s up, just in case. We know what’s up. I get them from my friends. I respond with okay, I got you. But the next

morning, I'm calling like you alright girl, where are you? They do the same with me.

Then if they're okay, I'm like well how was it?

Furthermore, Ricky talked about a sense of comfort and safety by having the guys come to his house, instead of him going to their house. "I don't know why I feel more comfortable at my house. It's not like I have weapons at home. Those are some of the things, but I'm probably not as safe as I should be." Moreover, Ricky talked about his comfort level meeting strangers and how he feels safe only meeting gay guys. He stated, "I also have this thing that gay men aren't serial killers. I don't know if I have this notion of this guy ain't gonna hurt me, because I've never hooked up with anyone other than gay men." He expressed that, "I wonder if I would be more cautious if it was a married guy. I only trick with gay men who are not married to women. I know that I would be. He has more to lose."

In addition, Ricky talked about how he protects himself when using adam4adam, which is the only chat website that he used. Ricky took special care to keep his identity as vague as possible in his profiles and when chatting to others. He said, "I try to keep it vague. I don't have my face pic available until after I get to know them, and I can close that at any point." Consequently, "some people are smart and know how to copy and paste your picture and save it." Ricky talked about not giving out his real personal information until after he has built a certain comfort level. He continued, "I try to keep it fairly ambiguous, where you might have to think a little bit. I would never say where I live or where I go to school, that's narrowing it in too much. I try to keep it vague." Furthermore, he indicated, "you might not get the real name until I get to know you. For me, I don't expect boys to give me a real name."

Playing what seems like a game to protect his personal information, Ricky explained, “if it’s weeks later and we happen to get together again, and he confesses, it’s not even a shock, because I do it too.” In addition, his general expectation of getting false information is high. He explained, “I expect to get a bunch of false information, and in some ways I get it, because they don’t know me. They don’t know what I might do with that.”

Unfortunately, playing this game has not always protected Ricky’s identity. Ricky talked about a person with whom he had chatted and the actions that this person took to discover who Ricky really was. He stated:

I had a scenario where I went through the emails with the boy, and we talked on the phone and I was telling him who I am, my name, where I grew up, and he figured out who I was for real, and people that I knew, and he called one of the guys. I was so heated, but that’s the kind of bullshit, and so he called a good friend of mine and said oh I just met your boy online, and it was so messy. Of course, my friend called me to tell me. In a lot of ways we have to do these things to protect ourselves. I don’t want to necessarily have everybody know that I’m online tricking, because not everyone can handle that information.

Collin’s response was very similar to the response of other participants. He indicated, “in all honesty, I never think about that. The one time that I went home and fooled around with someone in my apartment I had just met that night that was not a concern.” Collin expressed that he always expected the best out of people. He went on to say, “I guess that just comes back to me feeling really naive and expecting the best out of people.” He concluded:

Oh it's a friend of a friend, nothing bad would happen, and then I guess with the other people since it was my friends, I never really thought about it. I know I would still have that naive perception if I were to have a random hook up with someone to go home and have sex or go to their place. I know with that person I was like I want you to come to my apartment because my roommate was there. I was like hell no. I would never go to their apartment. He was a lot bigger than me, so I thought about that. I only remember that one time that I was having someone over. I guess when I hooked up with my friends, I never really thought about it because I had been friends with those people for so long that I knew that not to be part of their personality.

Similar to Ricky, Tommy was very deliberate about protecting himself while using online chat rooms to mingle with other men. Tommy used multiple, well-thought-out techniques to gauge the honesty level of those with whom he chatted. Tommy indicated, "I'm just always hesitant, and I always try to put things into place so that I can somehow protect myself. With online dating, there is always that possibility, and even though I am putting these things in place, there is always the possibility that things can happen because you can't ever be sure anymore." In addition, Tommy explained how the website, realjock.com had its' own verification system that he had come to depend on.

A nice thing about [realjock](http://realjock.com) they have a feature they call getting verified. They send you an email and they ask you to write whatever they sent you on a piece of paper, like a code or something, and you take a picture of yourself with that code and send it back to them right away to verify that it's you in that profile and to verify that everything matches, so it kind of verifies that it's not a fake profile or anything like

that. I guess it's not 100% foolproof, but at least it makes me somewhat a little more reassured that the person I'm talking to is who they say they, because it will mark on their profile if they're verified or not, and not everybody is, so I will contact people who are verified.

Using the verification system on realjock.com is just one way that Tommy protected himself. In addition, he used his webcam to know the person before meeting. Tommy stated, "what I'll do is start with Internet chatting, and then I typically like to webcam with a person so I can see who they are and talk with them first." After chatting to the person using the webcam, he determines that "if we were to ever meet up, I always meet up in a public place, like a coffee shop or something, or at a restaurant where there are other people around so that I'm in public." Prior to meeting for the first time, Tommy also talked about investigating the person as much as possible given his ability and access to the Internet. He indicated, "I do try to investigate. Sometimes I'll ask for Facebook profiles so I can verify who the person is." Using Facebook allowed Tommy to "do research on the person and make sure that they're verified, and make sure that we do something like webcam or video chat on the net, so that I can actually see them and I'm a little more comforted."

Understanding his limitations, Tommy also acknowledged that he can only find information that is made available to him and that no matter how hard he tries, he may not always know the truth about something regarding the person. He stated:

There's only so much you can know about a person online. A lot of times guys will lie about things, and there's no way to know all of that. At least this way, I know the person I'm talking is actually who they say they are. They maybe lying about

everything else, but at least I know it's not a guy that's twice his age or a totally different person. At least I can somewhat know who I'm talking to before I meet them. I have probably met five or six guys from online. All of them have been positive experiences for me. They are pretty much exactly who they said they were online.

Campus Resources

“My friend got tested once, and the next time he went there, it seemed that everybody in the staff knew that this was the guy that had had the STD test. It made him very uncomfortable.”-- Ivan

The participants perspectives concerning available campus resources were varied. The experience of these participants to access resources on campus focused on the sexual health practices of gay college students were eye opening. These experiences can prove useful to higher education professional, especially in areas of engagement to address the needs of this student population. For example, Kyle talked about his experiences in getting tested for HIV at the student health center as being positive. Kyle stated that “I had a good experience there. I think I was treated respectfully.” In being treated well, Kyle explained what happened during his experience, “I went in with my wedding ring on and told them I'd had anal intercourse with somebody that I was a little weary about whether he had an STD or not, and so I had all the tests that they test for.” In addition, he stated, “they asked if I had

any symptoms and I didn't. They did a blood test, an AIDS test and everything came back clean. I thought I was treated well there.”

Although Kyle had an overall positive experience using the student health center, he did express concern over the lack of services that are specifically available to gay male student population. Based on his experience, Kyle was not aware of health resources dedicated exclusively to gay male college students.

Besides seeing a nurse at the health center, I don't know that the center promotes healthy sexual contact for gay students. If there is one, I don't know about it. Maybe the LGBTSS has something like that, but I've never seen a bowl of condoms on their desk or anything. I have seen that on the desk of the instructor who teaches the human sexuality class. She would bring in the bowl every semester and have both candy and condoms in it. That way, if a student reached in for something, you didn't know what they were picking out. It's nice that she made that available in that class. I think at the student health center there is like a candy bowl with condoms in it, maybe at the pharmacy desk or something, but beyond that I don't know what they have available. There probably is something and I haven't looked. I would guess that more could be done in the LGBT Student Services office to promote healthy sexuality there. I know they have lots of books and stuff and I'm sure if you ask them, they could tell you where to get free condoms and lube and whatever else. I've just never done it.

Unlike Kyle, Ricky had never used any of the health services offered by the university, but was somewhat aware of what services were offered. According to Ricky, “probably because

of my short time here, and I guess my perception of what I've done hasn't been that risky. I've gotten tested since I've lived here, but with my own doctor, just not the health center." In talking about the general perception of the convenience of the services, Ricky indicated that:

I would say that it's really convenient. I mean, it's here, and I work here and go to class here. The convenience is probably pretty clear. I'm sure they're confidential. I assume they have a lab or something. If I'm sitting in the lab and my friends come in, I wonder if my hesitance is around people knowing I'm getting tested. Which isn't a bad thing, but where they might run with that, so I think that might be one reason I avoid it. For the most part, since I've been here, I just go see my doctor when I'm home.

In talking about his exposure to the services offered on campus, Ricky explained that "I just don't pay attention to that here. I don't want to necessarily say the LGBTSS office does that because it's not a gay thing." Furthermore, he stated that "I would assume that they do, but I don't know. I can't recall a flier or an email saying come to this program, or come get free condoms." Ricky continued to expand upon the programmatic aspect that he says he hasn't seen on campus. "I can say that the marketing and exposure of the available resources is not there. That's what I haven't seen. Whatever exists, I don't know about it." In addition, Ricky concluded that:

Because I'm a little more mature, I know that I can go to the health center and probably get what I need. As far as like, educational programming, if those things are happening, I don't think it's being pushed, or maybe it's being marketed to a certain

group or in certain buildings. I'm not likely to be hanging out in the Memorial Union, so if that's where it's promoted, you're missing students like me. I can't speak to the resources, but I do know that the marketing is poor and weak.

Unlike the experience of Ricky, Ivan had used the services on campus as a student. In addition, Ivan provided a historical context to the services offered at the student health center. Ivan explained that "I'm not sure if they still do the free HIV testing. This was two years ago maybe at the health center. I was lucky to get in right before the funding was cut, and even then it was a very long wait." Having a long wait, Ivan talked about what the experience was like for him. He stated that "you would go in, get tested, and then wait two weeks for the results to be turned around because they would send the samples to some laboratory." Due to the longer waiting period, Ivan explained that "I have been tested on campus. When I got tested, I was not able to go back and get my results, so I don't know what happened at that time." In addition, Ivan stated that:

Although I did hear from another friend of mine who had been tested there, and the staff that was working there were not very respectful of people's confidentiality. My friend got tested once, and the next time he went there, it seemed that everybody in the staff knew that this was the guy that had had the STD test. It made him very uncomfortable.

In addition to Ivan's friend not having a great experience getting tested for STDs on campus, Ivan talked in more detail about the test no longer being free for students. Ivan explained, "I would think that people who are more serious about getting tested would go ahead and get

themselves checked out.” Furthermore, Ivan talked about the realities of not having free testing on campus. He stated:

Now that we don’t have free access to the test on campus, I think the options that you have now are that you go to Planned Parenthood and they charge you \$30 fee, or you go to Des Moines to that project where you get free testing but you have to make that commute back and forth. What I’m trying to say is that people who are still serious about getting themselves tested would still avail these services but not the others.

Some of them might not care that much, like who is going to pay that \$30 or drive to Des Moines to get tested? So it affects that specific type of the population.

Conversely, Ivan did see the LGBT Student Services office as a benefit to students on campus. He felt that “just having the LGBT services center is a huge asset.” More specifically, Ivan explained “you get more information there, you can always talk to people, and there is free condoms and dams and whatnot. I guess we do have the resources.”

Realizing the resources that are available on campus, Ivan went on to say that “even at the health center, you can pick up some free condoms, but they don’t keep them in the lobby anymore.” Ivan considered not having access to the condoms in the public lobby as a barrier.

He continued:

You have to have an appointment with the doctor and the condoms are in the room with the doctor. So it’s not as easily accessible as before. Before, people would walk into the health center, pick up the condoms and leave. Now you have to have an appointment. In addition, I guess the LGBT Student Services center closes for the day at 5pm. It’s not like you can just run up there any time of the day. Same goes

with the health center, which is even less accessible because you have to schedule the doctor. So just having some place that is just up for grabs and go pick up stuff. I doubt that people always plan to have sex sometimes, so if we have more limited access to these services, it creates difficulties. The easier the access, the easier it will be to follow more safe and healthy practice.

Collin had also used some of the resources on campus, more specifically, the student health center. His firsthand experience and account of his experience sounds very similar the experience that Ivan recalled about his friend, but even more daunting. Collin talked about having contracted an STD due to infidelity in his prior relationship. In addition, he talked about the shame and guilt that he had endured and the experience that he had with his doctor on campus. Collin revealed:

I went to student health center here and I saw a doctor, and the way he talked about it with me, there is just a lack of compassion. As we were talking and I revealed to him that I was trying to get rid of this STD, and he jumped to conclusions and said ‘You only have same sex partners, don’t you?’ And I felt very stigmatized by that. I was like are you making presumptions about the way that my hair looks, the way that I’m dressed, the way that I speak? What are your underlying assumptions by jumping to that conclusion, because I think you should say what type of sexual partners do you have, and be broad and let the person define that. It was just very stigmatizing.

In addressing the resources that are available from the student health center, Collin felt that they were not adequately appropriate for the gay male population needs and their sexual health. He stated, “people talk about safe sex, and they give out free condoms, but the

condoms say Prevent the Stork. I'm not going to fucking have a baby. I'm having sex with men. Let's be real." In wanting to have a real conversation about sexual health, Collin also suggested that "people talk about sexual health as in preventing babies, but not in a sex-positive way. We can't talk about having sex for the enjoyment of mutual pleasure with you and your partner, but doing so in a safe way." In addition, Collin suggested:

We don't talk about that and it's almost like stigmatized to talk about having sex unless it's between you and one of your close friends. When I talk to some of the younger gay men who come into the LGBTSS that I talk to and am friends with, and they share these things about hooking up with people, and I'm like did you use protection? They're like well of course I did, but sometimes I feel like they're not being honest with me, because there is such a stigma and we can't talk about it. I wish that we could be more open about sexual health with gay men. Everything is geared toward men and women and not having babies.

The sense of stigma in talking about being sexually active is something that Collin was passionate about. He felt that in his experiences, especially the ones that he had with his doctor, often "stigmatizes being sexually active or talking about it. I think it stigmatizes people wanting to go to the health center to figure out if they have an STD and what to do about it. I think it affects mental health and they think they're alone." Furthermore, Collin indicated:

I think that not openly discussing it makes people feel shameful about wanting to get condoms and lube, and how to practice safe sex. So by shaming that, they're not as apt to go and buy these things, and then when you're in the heat of the moment, and

you're ashamed to buy these things, you're not going to have the things that you need to have safe sex. That is so crucial. If we could talk about it in a positive way, people wouldn't be embarrassed to go to the convenience store and the University Drive community center and buy a pack of condoms and not feel like they have a million eyes on them. They should be celebrated for going in there and buying a box of damn condoms. But they feel shamed by doing that, and that's what's causing people to get pregnant, and that's what's causing people to make the decision of having an abortion, and that's what's causing people to have HIV and STDs because they can't go and find these resources because people look down or assume certain things if they ask.

Tommy's experience was similar to Ricky's, in that he had not used the services on campus, but did plan to do so in the near future. "I haven't been tested here and that's just because I haven't had a sexual experience since my last test. I plan on going to the student health center if I do become sexually active again in the future." Although he has never used the student health center, Tommy did share his previous experiences going to the doctor. He stated, "I don't have experience there, but my experience at the other was very...I had a lot of anxiety. I was nervous to tell the doctor what I did." Tommy was nervous to talk to his doctor because of the fear of being judged. He revealed that "there is definitely a barrier going to the doctor because you have to tell them that you had sex with another man. And seeing their reaction to that and not knowing how they're going to handle that." The intense pressure of dealing with potential negative reaction from the doctor is something that Tommy had to deal with. He also felt that:

I know that there's a lot of homophobia and I've heard of negative experiences from friends going to doctors and stuff and talking about that, just reading research on that. And I was always a little nervous to go to the health centers to get tested just because I had to talk about that I'm getting tested because I'm having sex with a guy and all the HIV stuff. In New York they have anonymous testing, and that's a little less stressful, but at the same time you're hooking up with guys you don't know 100% and there's always a risk involved because of that. I can't ever say that I was comfortable going.

In focusing on the resources on campus, Tommy felt that he was aware of the general resources offered by the university, including the student health center and LGBT center. He was aware of this information because of his student position on campus. He stated that "because of my position, I learned about a lot of the resources on campus so that I could provide them to other students, and I researched a lot of those coming into it." In addition, Tommy talked about these resources and what they offered for students. He stated that "he knew about the student health center and about LGBTSS and a lot of the groups they have on campus and that kind of stuff." However, Tommy acknowledged that "if I would have come in with a different experience I am not sure I would have been aware of everything. Because I'm new to the school, I'm not sure how undergraduate students for example find that information." Tommy concluded that "for me, I am aware of all the resources, and I do feel comfortable here going to any of those resources that I need to in the future."

In contrast, Tommy was critical of the resources offered because of the lack of attention specifically given to gay male college students. He expressed, "At Iowa State, I

don't think they focus on gay male issues and sexual health. In the residence halls, the condoms that they give out, their slogan says something about a stork, I can't remember." In addition, he went on to express that:

It's all about preventing pregnancy. It focuses on heterosexual sex. It doesn't talk about STDs or HIV that's possible through that slogan. It doesn't address that, and it doesn't address any LGBT person that would want to have sex. Because for me, as a gay man, I don't have to worry about pregnancy because I'm not going to have sex with a woman. So I think that messaging is geared toward heterosexual sex. At least through my experience I haven't seen anything geared toward sexual health stuff and I think all the condom stuff is geared toward preventing pregnancy. So at least for me I feel like there's nothing that this school has done toward gay men or their experiences or the issues that they're going through. I know that LGBTSS will work a lot with activism on campus and stuff with LGBT issues, but I think a lot more needs to be done because a lot of the messaging is very based on heterosexual sex. It's not geared toward LGBT.

Participants' Last Thoughts

This section is specifically dedicated to the participants and allows them a chance to express any sentiment that was important to them. Discussing one's deepest, darkest secrets and sexual activities takes a great deal of courage and bravery. I felt that it was only appropriate to allow these brave souls an opportunity to express their feelings in a way that

was raw and true for them. In this section I present the participants' final comments, which were varied, yet relevant to this study.

Tommy

“I think gay youth have an extremely difficult time growing up because there is so little support.”

I think gay youth have an extremely difficult time growing up because there is so little support. I think it is unique compared to other kids, not minimizing their experiences whatsoever, but I know some of my gay friends don't have support from family or friends, they don't have support from the community or the church, and you really grow up isolated and alone. A lot of times when they talk about bullying campaigns, they talk about go talk to your parents or someone you can trust. LGBT kids, sometimes they can't. They can't go to their parents or to the church or something else because they don't accept them. I think it's very difficult and because of that, you have to go through a lot of that experience on your own. Then they get to the adult world, and a lot of times I turned online because I needed that community, because I didn't have parents that supported me, or friends or anybody that I could go to.

So I went online to that environment, and there's a lot of guys online that are just looking for sex, so when you're young and new and don't know what to expect, it is very easy to get taken advantage of, and it is very easy to succumb to a lot of that pressure and it is very easy to try to mold yourself to this culture and get into that

because you don't have the education and knowledge and support from parents and friends all the time to tell you that what you're doing can be dangerous and what you're doing can have consequences, and I don't think a lot of people hear about that. I know they are starting bullying campaigns and the It Gets Better project that are geared toward LGBT kids that address some of the issues but I feel like there's a lot of work that needs to be done. I think this really taps into health complications and it is a really big issue and there is a lot of things that play into it. There is not just one thing that plays into it, there are a lot of things that play into it. I can only speak from my experience, but I think it's a big deal

Ricky

“I think there is some value to websites and gay culture, especially for those men who are dealing with their identity . . .”

I think there is some value to websites and gay culture, especially for those men who are dealing with their identity and trying to figure out if this is something that they like, or living with that question am I gay or not? How might I meet a guy with some degree of confidentiality and explore? So I'm going to get on this site, I'm 25 years old, thinking about men, I just want to know what it's like, the conversations and the sex, so I think it could be a pretty valuable tool for those guys who are trying to explore, and we know the college year kids explore. What about the man who doesn't go to college and grew up in the rural South and is having these urges, and there's no outlet? I can see that not necessarily tricking in how we might define that,

but yeah I want to try it out and see if I really like rubbing up against a man or having a man inside me, or me in him, and this might be a way to do it.

I think potentially that's a tool, instead of I know I'm gay and I just want to fuck tonight. I've worked hard all week and I need a piece of ass or whatever. I think the other thing, when you look at these websites, adam4adam and others as well, it really opens your eyes to the magnitude of gayness and it helps a person to overcome this notion of what gay looks like. You can see soft feminine boys, but you can also see hardcore muscular manly men that people don't necessarily associate with gay. To see some of the pictures could be eye-opening and maybe a man who is very masculine who says I don't see gay men who look like me or I don't know how to meet them. I see good looking men in the gym who I'm attracted to and we're both manly, but I don't know how to talk to them, so I'll get on this site. My point though is that it gives us the gamut of what gay men can look like in all races, all geographic locations, all body types. It's not just the skinny boy with the tight jeans on. That's just a small percentage.

Ivan

"We think we are decent people, we have some accomplishments, but it is still so hard to find somebody who you would majorly be interested in."

I am looking for true love. Any suggestions? I don't get it. And I've seen this frustration in some other friends I have that are gay. We think we are decent people, we have some accomplishments, but it is still so hard to find somebody who you

would majorly be interested in. Maybe we are shooting for something that's not all that common. Maybe that really nice good match happens very rarely, but that's what has been sold to this society. Looking for that one person who is a good blend with you and love blooms and all that. I don't know how true that is, but we all strive for that.

We do have to acknowledge the dual nature of this situation. It's not just me in the dyad. It has to include someone else too. I do have some standards that I might tend to be rigid about, and I would not be willing to take just anybody. I did date somebody last year, and I did not really find myself very interested in the person.

Although I thought he was a nice guy, I was expecting more chemistry, I guess, and it wasn't as much. So my standards, definitely. Also, I don't find as many people who would be interested in me, so maybe it's a smaller pool out there because I am international, shorter, maybe that.

Collin

"I feel that people who are more closeted or more recently out are more apt to use those because they've been so restricted in allowing themselves to experience a gay social community that they perceive that's the only way, or the easiest way to access it."

I don't think I spoke about hesitancy, about some of my hesitancy toward some of the sex-centric gay dating websites. My stigma against them is that it's what everyone perceives the gay community to be, very promiscuous and I don't want to be that way. I think part of my avoidance from them for so long is like judging them and

being like people that do that are really skanky and that's really trashy, so I thought if I did it, I'd be hypocritical, I guess. Even though I didn't really want to do them, I just felt really unsafe with it and was nervous about it. Another reason I don't think I've used them is because Ames is the first place I've ever lived away from my home city, and since I came out at such an early age, I literally felt like I knew every gay person in my hometown, or they knew me. So I felt like if I wanted to meet a gay person, I could just meet them. Like I know someone who would know them, or I just know who they were. So I didn't need to use the gay dating websites to meet men.

I think that can also be attributed to how out I was. I was like, everyone called me mother hen, the godmother of the gays back home. It was a big running joke back home. Everyone called me mother hen, and they'd be like calling me for advice. So I just knew everybody, and I didn't have to seek out people in that way. I feel that people who are more closeted or more recently out are more apt to use those because they've been so restricted in allowing themselves to experience a gay social community that they perceive that's the only way, or the easiest way to access it.

When you are 22 years old, 23 years old, and you're just coming out, you are sexually mature and you have those desires and those needs. If you see the only way to make a gay community is through a sex website, that's inevitable that those things would happen. My experience was so different that I had a very normalized gay youth. I started dating at the time that straight people started dating, so I didn't feel the

necessity to use those websites, so I think maybe that comes into play as to why I didn't use those as much.

Kyle

“Part of it might be just wanting to connect with somebody and it didn't necessarily have to be sexually, but that's an easy way to connect with somebody if they're horny and willing to meet you.”

In times of stress, I tend to hook up more, and I think it's just wanting a distraction, but I think also in terms of the timing that I hook up with somebody, taking care of yourself with masturbation is easier. It's cleaner, it's safer. It's not as thrilling or whatever, and I think since I've had a lot of partners, maybe my desire to find other people to hook up with has decreased. I think another part of it is my age. I am 32 and on a college campus. There starts to become a power difference between me, who is a little older, and someone who is an undergraduate. I don't want to take advantage of that. I really don't pursue hooking up with somebody who is younger than me. If they initiate and say I like older guys anyway and are you free, I want to be with you, and they're persistent about that, then I will meet with them.

There was somebody on Grindr once who asked me if I liked people young, and I said I don't do anyone under 18, and he said shucks or whatever. I actually reported him to the Grindr website because there is a way to do that, and I wouldn't talk to him anymore, because I don't want to take advantage of that power difference, and too, you never know if someone is trying to bait people and I am certainly not going to let

myself be baited that way. So that is something to think about, how to stay out of trouble legally with people. I don't chat with people if they let me know they're underage.

I think there is a compulsive aspect to hooking up, for me there has been. I mentioned that in times of high stress, and I don't have a lot of extra time, and it's those times when I should be using that time to study or working on that paper, when I was taking classes, because I'm horny right now. There were times when I was looking for someone to hook up with online and I knew that I wasn't horny. Maybe I had masturbated that day and I wasn't looking to get off necessarily, I was just looking to hook up with somebody. Why I would want to do that when I wasn't necessarily horny, I haven't figured that out yet.

I did see a counselor a couple years ago, maybe three years ago, and we talked about me spending time, and it was really a time issue for me, it wasn't that I felt like I was bad or wrong or anything for looking at porn or hooking up with people, but I just felt like I was not using my time in a wise way, so there was a compulsive element to spending my time online with porn or hooking up with people and I didn't need to spend my time that way. Part of it might be just wanting to connect with somebody and it didn't necessarily have to be sexually, but that's an easy way to connect with somebody if they're horny and willing to meet you.

I don't know exactly what that was about but there was a compulsive element to it. I don't think the counseling was very effective for the main issue I was going in for, but it was effective for other things. The counselor used the word "authentic" and

“authenticity” and she felt that it was important to figure out a way to be authentic about my disbelief in God, with my wife especially, about my sexual orientation. So it turned into a place where I could come out about those things, but I haven’t felt safe enough in the relationship to come out about having hooked up with people.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings of this study. These begin with an introduction of the participants, followed by a discussion of the four themes with quotations and supporting evidence. In addition, this section included the unfiltered voice of the participants throughout, which is crucially important for a study of this nature. It was my hope that the reader could become immersed into these brave participants’ complex experiences as members of the gay community. Chapter 5 revisits the theoretical framework of this study, and addresses general conclusions, limitations, implications for practice, recommendations, and my role and reflexivity in conducting the study.

CHAPTER 5:
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS
FOR PRACTICE, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND RESEARCHER ROLE AND
REFLEXIVITY

Theoretical Framework

Two models provided the framework for understanding the overall experience of these participants. The Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity (EMGMI) and the Health Belief Model (HBM) both constructed the contextual and theoretical foundation for this study. Holistically, the EMGMI addresses psychosocial influences affecting gay men. The HBM addresses negotiations people make in reference to their own health risks based on the activities that they engage in. The participants, their intersecting identities, and their individual choices are reflected in different ways in relation to their overall development and how their development intersects with the EMGMI and HBM models. Below, I expand upon the various participants and how they manage their identities and their sexual health decisions.

Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity

The EMGMI model closely ties into this study because of how the overall development of the participants was influenced by their surroundings. Each participant was impacted in varying levels; hence each participant is at very different stages in their own gay identity development. The environmental impact on each of these participants also varied at different points in their lives. For example, Tommy indicated that he had little support from his family and friends when he was initially discovering his identity as a gay male.

Furthermore, Tommy initially had self-hatred because of his sexual orientation and was unsure of who he was and who he really wanted to be. It wasn't until he was in New York that he began to really explore his overall identity and was exposed to various aspects of the gay community. Tommy felt that he was now in an environment in which supported him, hence he has become more open about his sexual orientation and exploring new qualities about himself.

In contrast to Tommy is Collin, who came out as gay at a very young age and who had the full support of his family. Hence, Collin is very comfortable with his sexuality and is not afraid to challenge anyone who questions who he is. However, Collin has had to deal with varying degrees of harassment, which has caused him to be very aware of his surroundings and the situations that he puts himself into. Kyle, Ricky, and Ivan have all evolved over time and have had ample experience and engagement in the gay community. Kyle acknowledges that he is gay, but very much lives a heterosexual lifestyle as a father and husband. He retains his sexual identity as a gay male, but the environment that he engages in daily is heteronormative in nature. Ricky is comfortable with his sexual identity, but does not readily share or talk about his personal life in the professional setting. Ivan is also comfortable with his sexual identity, but does not share this with his family due to cultural concerns. Socially, he is out and is very active in the local gay community.

Health Belief Model

The HBM was a critical part of this study; hence the participants were encouraged to talk about their sexual health behaviors and any negotiations that take place during their

tricking encounters. Ricky was fully aware of the risks that are associated with tricking encounters and makes the use of protection an important part of any encounter that involves anal intercourse. However, the use of protection during oral sex is not something that he engages in. This is because he feels the risks are minimal. Similarly, Ivan made it very clear that having unprotected anal sex was not an option, no matter what. He indicated that he usually talks about his expectations before having sex so that there is no misunderstanding. In addition, Ivan also acknowledged that the use of protection during oral sex should take place, but does not because he considers the risk of contracting an STD from oral sex minimal.

Although Collin understood the risk of having unprotected anal sex during tricking encounters, he admitted that he has engaged in unprotected anal sex in the past. When Collin feels emotionally attached to others, he also trusts them; hence having unprotected anal sex becomes something that he was willing to engage in. In addition, he does not use protection during oral sex, because he perceives the risk to be minimal. Tommy also talked about the use of protection and how important it is for him. Tommy is very sensitive and knowledgeable about STDs and prevention. He does not allow his sexual partner to ejaculate inside him, even when they have on a condom. In addition, he acknowledges that he has been in situations in which he has had unprotected sex, which frustrated him because he considers himself to be very health conscious. He felt that there are times that even the most trained and knowledgeable person could make poor health decisions during the heat of the moment and passion of having sexual encounters, that decisions may be regretted in the future.

Conclusion and Themes with Questions

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore tricking encounters by gay male college students and its implications on gay male health practices. The research questions used in this study addressed the tricking encounters of gay male college students and how they use the Internet and social media to facilitate these tricking encounters. The questions engage this research and address the different layers of the sexual well-being of gay male college students. The research questions for this study were:

1. How do gay male college students make meaning of their tricking encounters as college students?
2. What roles might the Internet and social media have in facilitating gay male college students' tricking encounters?
3. How do gay male college students perceive the adequacy of existing sexual health resources available to them on campus?
4. What personal safety measures do gay male college students practice when tricking?

Current research on college students' sexual risk behavior focuses on heterosexual students, whereas there is very little research focusing on the sexual risk behaviors of gay male college students. Furthermore, there have been many studies that focus on understanding various aspects of human sexuality and how they relate to college students. However, the current research leaves a void and does not specifically focus on gay male college students' sexual encounters and how their actions impact their well-being. There are

a multitude of resources on college campuses that address minimizing the sexual risk behaviors of college students, however, due to the stigma that is placed by society on sexuality, rarely are resources solely dedicated to the sexual risk behaviors of gay male college students. Furthermore, there is a need to discuss the use of the Internet and social media in facilitating these tricking encounters and the impact technology has on the well-being of gay male college students.

This study used a phenomenological approach, which is a form of qualitative research. Using a phenomenological approach enabled me to explore the sexual behaviors of gay male college students and the implications these behaviors have on their health. Concurrently, this study explored the use of the Internet and social media to facilitate tricking encounters and/or other relationships. In addition, The Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity and the Health Belief Model were the frameworks that I used in this study. Hence, it is important to note that both the EMGMI and HBM models directly tie into the overall purpose of this study.

Themes with Questions

Four major themes were identified as a result of the interviews in this study. In-depth interviews were conducted to gather the data in this study, along with analyzing questionnaires that each participant completed. The four major themes found as they relate to the four research questions that guided this study are presented in the following table.

Table 3.1 Theme Chart

Research Questions	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4
	Tricking encounters and use of the Internet and social media	Masculinity and body image issues	Awareness of STD issues and personal safety	Adequacy of campus resources
1) How do gay male college students make meaning of their tricking encounters as college students?	✓	✓	✓	✓
2) What roles might the Internet and social media have in mediating gay male college students' tricking encounters?	✓	✓		
3) How do gay male college students perceive the adequacy of existing sexual health resources available to them on campus?			✓	✓
4) What personal safety measures do gay male college students practice when tricking?			✓	✓

Summary of Themes

- 1. Tricking encounters allowed the participants to explore their sexuality and identity, meet others similar to them, and in some cases develop various types of relationships. In addition, the Internet and social media were used as a way to connect with others, explore their sexuality, and engage in anonymous tricking encounters with other gay men in a relatively anonymous and secretive environment without the commitment of any kind of relationship.**

Participants engaged in tricking encounters for various reasons. Tricking encounters served the role of allowing the participants to explore their identity and sexuality in relatively anonymous encounters. These encounters were often facilitated via the Internet and social media, in addition to other natural settings such as meeting people at meetings and events on campus. With the rise of the Internet and social media, many gay male college students spend much of their time using the Internet to maintain contact with their friends and family and to make connections with people that they do not know personally. In addition, many gay college students frequently use the Internet and social media in pursuit of sexual contact. Websites, such as adam4adam.com, craigslist.com, manhunt.com, gay.com and others, have become popular among gay male college students. Along with these websites, the use of smartphone apps, such as Grindr has become popular. The use of both the websites and smartphone apps allows for almost instant access to other guys wherever you may be. Such websites and apps allowed participants to connect with others for sex or friendship conveniently and anonymously, anywhere in the world.

2. There was a strong sense of peer pressure and awareness of body image and masculinity issues as a member of the gay community.

As gay male college students, body image and masculinity are crucial components of their identities. Masculinity and body image are complex and engage multiple facets of a person's identity. When one considers the intersectionality of masculinity, body image and a gay sexual identity, a person's awareness and sense of being part of the gay community are heightened and can be harder to grasp. The peer pressure to look a certain way or to fit into the hegemonic stereotype and perception of masculinity is powerful and can be overwhelming for many of the participants in this study. In addition, the participants not only had to consider body image issues, but they also have to be aware of how they are perceived by others who see themselves as being a part of the hetero-normative majority.

3. There was a heightened awareness of the potential STD risks of tricking encounters, however physical & personal safety were not primary concerns in these encounters.

Tricking is common in the gay community and by gay male college students. The participants in this study had a heightened awareness of STD risks and they addressed these risks in different ways. Some participants admitted to having unprotected sex during tricking encounters, often with those that they either had prior relationships with or felt a sense of trust and comfort with. Others were very adamant about using protection, regardless of the connection to the person or prior relationship. For the most part, the participants in this study

did not have a heightened concern over their personal safety during these encounters. However, all participants acknowledged the need to be aware of how to protect themselves from physical harm during these encounters, and doing so in various ways that fit into their own way of meeting others. For example, Tommy talked about using the verification system built into the website that he primarily uses as a way to validate the authenticity of the individuals he chats with.

4. There was a feeling that campus resources geared to the sexual health of gay male college students are minimal.

The participants in this study varied in their perception of the available resources on campus. The participants all acknowledged the access to prophylactics at the student health center, however the extent to which they are available was questioned. Ivan felt that the access to condoms and free HIV testing had diminished over time. He expressed that condoms were no longer available in the waiting room, but that students now have to make an appointment to see the doctor to get free condoms. In addition, he expressed that the access to free HIV testing was terminated by the student health center and that the closest free access to such testing was more than 35 minutes away, which creates a hardship for many who wish to have the testing done. Furthermore, there was frustration about the lack of resources that are specifically available for gay men. For example, some of the participants talked about the “Prevent the Stork” campaign and how it targets the heterosexual community and the prevention of pregnancy.

Limitations

As with any study, this study had various limitations due to the subject nature and sensitivity of this topic. There are a total of eight limitations that I identified for this study. First, The Institutional Review Board at this university limited the total number of participants in this study to 10 due to the nature of the study and the concern of the impact participating in a study like this may have on the participants. Although this study had only five participants, if more than 10 participants wanted to be a part of this study, this would have limited the richness of the data in the study that could have been collected from having a larger participant pool.

The second limitation of this study is that the IRB required contact information be provided for resources on campus, more specifically Student Counseling Services and the Prevention Services Department at the student health center. The IRB felt that at any point during the study, the participants may feel the need for counseling, to process their experience. In addition, providing information for the Prevention Services Department to discuss any concerns regarding being sexually active could be useful for potential participants. Although it was helpful to include this information on the Informed Consent form, this may have dissuaded potential participants from wanting to participate in this study or could have made them feel stigmatized for being a part of a marginalized group and the perception of the need for counseling and/or sexual health services.

The third limitation of this study was the concern from the IRB over the safety and privacy of the researcher. To address this concern, the IRB required the creation of an email account that was solely dedicated to this study to use in all advertisement and recruitment

materials instead of using my ISU student email address. M4Mstudy@iastate.edu was created as the primary way for communication in this study with all the participants and was used in all advertisement and recruitment materials. This could have been a limitation because of the perception of the lack of anonymity because the email address is connected with the university. Although this limitation was unexpected, the concern raised by IRB was acknowledged by the researcher.

The fourth limitation of this study involved the concern of recruitment of participants. Obtaining participants for this study proved to be even more difficult than expected, because sexual orientation is an identity that is often hidden. An announcement about this study was distributed using listservs, websites, and student organizations that are gay orientated. Furthermore, some of the websites blocked the research announcement, because it was categorized as spam or not being from a real person. This was based on the rejection emails that were sent to the M4Mstudy@iastate.edu. This also limited the ability and access to sample profiles to share in the appendix section. In addition, the use of snowball sampling was crucial to recruit participants. Due to the sensitivity of the research topic, a majority of research conducted with gay participants uses purposeful recruitment methods.

The fifth limitation of this study was that the sample was obtained only at one Midwestern university. To have a broader discussion about gay college men and tricking, this study would need to be inclusive of other campuses and involve more participants from those campuses who meet the criteria for this study. Nonetheless, this study highlights and provides insight into this culture and the lived experiences of this understudied population of students.

The sixth limitation of this study involves the extent to which the participants were being fully honest in their responses and in telling their stories. I acknowledge that the topic can prove to be very uncomfortable and difficult to talk about, especially with a stranger. There were times when I asked questions and observed and sensed hesitation from the participants to answer the question. This hesitation may have led to responses in which participants may have not fully disclosed their actions and behavior. I do feel that the participants were being as honest and as open as they felt and admit that I was surprised and startled at times by some of the candid responses that were given by all of the participants.

The seventh limitation was that due to the sensitive nature of this study, some of the data collected were highly profound, sexually explicit and disturbing. I felt the need to ensure that this data was used in an appropriate manner, hence I informed the IRB. The identities of the participants were not revealed to the IRB.

The last limitation of this study is that it only involved gay male college students. Therefore, the information provided cannot be generalized to all gay male or gay female college students. The experience of these different groups could be different, with different sets of concerns and challenges. Furthermore, this study does not take into account the experience of heterosexual male and female students and the concerns and challenges that those populations may face.

Implications for Practice

The implications for practice in student affairs are numerous. Based on this study, I have identified 11 implications for practice. To address the needs of this marginalized population, one must consider a multilayered approach that addresses the holistic student. In addition, one must also consider the context in which these recommendations are made and acknowledge that they cannot be universal, especially since every institution is different and has varied missions, priorities, and levels of support.

First, further education on the use of the Internet and social media in tricking encounters is needed. In addition, use of these entities to facilitate tricking encounters or other types of relationships should not be taken lightly and should be addressed as a tool of empowerment. Students should feel empowered to use these methods to meet others like them, but should also be educated on how to best navigate their way in these media in a safe and supportive environment. This includes educating students on how to protect themselves when chatting to others online and/or meeting in person. There is no easy answer in moving forward with this, but starting the dialogue is an important first step. Acknowledging the sensitivity around this topic, initiating a dialogue about tricking is a challenging step for student affairs professionals and students alike.

Second, further education on STD prevention and safer sex practices are needed for this population of students. There are very few, if any, resources that are solely dedicated to the empowerment of gay male college students and their sexual needs. This population is often overlooked or lumped in with others, with the expectation that their needs are being met. However, their needs are not being met and gay students are often alienated, especially

with the hetero-normative school of thought of sexual practices and the attention paid to the prevention of pregnancies. In addition, easier access to free, convenient, and confidential STD testing and prophylactics should be a standard on all college campuses for every student.

Third, further education and support of self-awareness and self-acceptance is needed for this population of students. Having to deal with the intersectionality of their identities can be overwhelming and confusing for many gay college students. Often, these students may be isolated or unaware of others like them, hence they seek information from the Internet or social media. The degree to which they may find this information is varied, but developing an environment that is supportive of self-awareness and self-acceptance would be a significant step toward their holistic development. In addition, self-help groups or access to gay-centric counseling services can be empowering for this group of students and should be made available in a manner that is open, supportive, yet as discrete and confidential as possible.

Fourth, further education and support of self-awareness and self-acceptance for student affairs professionals is needed. Having to deal with the intersectionality of their own identities is just as important as it is for students, hence student affairs professionals need to know how to and be willing to work through their own personal concerns to be effective in helping others. There is a greater need to engage in holistic personal development, similar to what students are encouraged to do, so that student affairs professionals are better prepared and able to be sensitive to the needs of their students. In addition, there is a need to be

supportive to colleagues in the pursuit of self-reflexivity and improvement, which is crucial to professional success, which in turn enables the success of students.

Fifth, further resources are needed for this population of students to engage and meet others in a confidential, safe, and welcoming environment on their respective college campuses. Many institutions have various departments, centers, or groups on campus that focus on the needs of gay college students. However, there is a need for these resources to better align with the sensitive needs of these students in a more open and encouraging manner and the alignment of resources and needs allows students to explore their multiple identities' without the fear of rejection or alienation because of their body image and/or sense of masculinity. In addition, there also needs to be further education and sensitivity training within the gay college community regarding acceptance of everyone for who and what they are.

The sixth implication is the need for further sensitivity training for health care professionals and how to work better with gay students is needed. Having to manage the intersectionality of their multiply identities is something that every gay student has to do. However, having to be concerned about access to medical care and the fear of being mistreated because of their sexual identity is not something that students should be concerned with. Health care professionals should be better trained to be sensitive to the needs of this student population in a way that is open, caring, non-judgmental, and growth positive. Creating such an environment is a crucial piece in encouraging responsible and sex-positive behaviors that engages these students to be empowered in taking responsibility for their overall health and well-being.

The seventh implication is that further education can be done at similar institutions. With the support of key administrators, the development of an institutional and systematic support structure that focuses on the issues of gay male college students and their well-being would be useful. This could be done via an instructional class that is offered to students. Given the support of administrators, this class could be required and/or optional for students as part of learning community. This class should address key areas, such as sexuality, body image, masculinity, personal safety and safer sex practices.

The eighth implication is that further education can be done on how to implement supportive policies for this student population. Recognizing that every institution is unique and operates in different ways, these policies should take into account factors such as the size, religious affiliation, being public or private, and the levels of institutional support.

The ninth implication is that education can be done to learn how to identify and collaborate with stakeholders on campuses who are advocates for this population of students and utilize their skills and support to initiate the change or policies that are needed.

The tenth implication is that further education should be done that focuses on staff development and how student affairs professionals can be better prepared to address the needs of these students.

Lastly, education can be done in graduate programs and through ongoing professional development that enables staff to challenge their own assumptions. This will allow them to learn more about, understand, embrace and value students on a higher level. We need to be intentional and purposeful of the staff that works with various student populations and that

the staff is truly an advocate who is aware, sensitive, and readily willing to assist students unconditionally.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are many avenues and branches of future research that can spawn from this study. These areas of future research have the potential to provide a more intimate view of gay student populations to both student affairs professionals and academia, in the hopes of developing ways to better serve these students. There are seven areas of future research that I have identified. First, future research on race and the implications this has in tricking encounters and/or other types of relationships that may develop and the use of the Internet and social media. From this study, I find that this area of research can be very informative and is important to gaining a different insight into the culture of tricking and any differences that may arise within and across people from various ethnic backgrounds.

Second, another topic for future research could focus on lesbians and their use of the Internet and social media to facilitate tricking encounters and/or other types of relationships. Although this study did not focus on lesbian students, their experiences are just as important and crucial to their holistic development and should not be taken lightly. This is an area of research that is also needed and can provide an intimate view of lesbian students in an effort to better support this student population.

Third, another topic for future research could focus on the regional differences in tricking encounters that may exist. The use of the Internet and social media may be the major way in which some gay men who are located in rural areas can meet each other,

whereas those who live in larger cities can meet each other in public places, such as bars and clubs. A person's location has a huge impact into their development of their sexual identity or lack thereof.

Fourth, another topic for future research could focus on heterosexual students and the use of the Internet and social media for hooking up encounters. Although there is already a great deal of research that focuses on heterosexual students, there are very few that focus specifically on their use of the Internet and social media to facilitate tricking encounters. This area of research is also necessary so that we can gain a more complete picture of the sexual activities and encounters of this population of students.

Fifth, another topic for future research is the effectiveness of STD prevention and education for gay college male students. Based on this study, most of the participants had knowledge of how to protect themselves, but still engaged in unprotected oral sex and occasionally unprotected anal sex. This shows that the work of STD education and prevention is far from done and can greatly benefit this population of students. This education can also focus on having frank and honest conversations with potential partners to discuss their risks and how to have sexual encounters in a safer manner.

The sixth recommendation for future research, which is closely related to the effectiveness of STD prevention and education, is the number of students who actually contract an STD due to their tricking encounters. This area of research could provide useful information about how to better educate students and what knowledge base could be incorporated to prevent STDs.

Lastly, another topic for future research could be how these students participant in tricking encounters in relation to their age group. Some of the participants talked about their age and how different it is being older; hence they adjust their expectations and what they are looking for. On the flip side, some of the younger participants talked about being taken advantage of and being put in compromising positions that they normally would not be in with older men. In addition, the age of the participants could correlate to their knowledge of STD prevention, education, use of the Internet and social media, and resources available to them.

Researcher Role and Reflexivity

As the researcher for this study, I saw many aspects of myself within the participants of this study. I acknowledge that I am part of the gay community and well aware of the tricking culture and the complexities that go along with being a part of the community and culture. Over the span of many years, I have witnessed this culture in the gay community and on college campuses. In addition, I have had many close friends who have frequently shared various aspects of their tricking encounters with me. I have always been intrigued with the culture of tricking, the impact it has on the gay community, and how people go about these experiences in their daily lives. I have witnessed tricking activities in public parks, bathrooms, and at various all-male establishments that cater to gay men. I have been in chatrooms and websites that cater to gay men and that could facilitate these encounters. Over the years, I have been curious as to what people's intentions are, what they are doing during these encounters, and how they protect themselves from STDs and personal harm.

As I proceeded to conduct this study, I felt a sense of purpose to highlight these experiences. I felt that I would easily be able to get participants to be a part of this study. I was wrong. What I failed to realize is that I was asking people to sit down with me and tell me their personal stories about their very personal and private encounters. Gaining the trust of another person to sit down and talking about having sex with another person and to share those details is not something that any of us would do on a normal basis. We each hold that part of our lives very close to us and very private. I was asking people to share what would normally be private with me as the researcher and eventually for the world. Once I realized this, I became very humble and grateful for the brave participants that did choose to walk this journey with me and tell me about their private lives. For this, I feel blessed and am forever humbled because of their courage to do this.

The experiences of these students are important and should be discussed in an environment of support and understanding. The purpose of this study is to highlight and provide education about these experiences to student affairs professionals and others who are not familiar with his culture, which is very much a part of the gay community. In addition, I must make it clear that this study is not and should not be used as a way to ridicule, diminish, and/or humiliate those who are part of this culture, but instead should be used as a springboard to bring awareness and resources that could be useful for this community to make the best decisions for their own personal growth and development. Unfortunately, due to some of the societal values and norms by which many of us operate, these experiences are often done in secrecy and privacy due to the fear of being judged, ridiculed, and outed as being gay and/or fear of losing those around us whom we care about and value.

I had a great deal of hesitation, uneasiness, and fear of doing this study, especially since I am a professional in student affairs and I identify as a gay, black man. Similar to the participants, I had to think long and hard about my role in doing this study, the implications that this study could have on my future, and the perceptions that others may have. I came to the realization and comfort in knowing that if I allowed those fears to dictate my future that I would only be giving in to the institutional and systematic systems of oppression that have dominated and suppressed the gay and lesbian culture for many, many years. Now is the time for me to break the mold and talk about the things that are crucial for student affairs professionals to hear, know, and hopefully discuss in a manner that is healthy and productive for all.

In addition, this study allowed me to feel what the participants felt in a very personal and intimate way that I have not experienced before. I have to admit that I felt I was also wearing my student affairs professional hat during this study, hence I constantly thought about the role of student affairs professionals and how we often fail to acknowledge and work through our own vulnerabilities, which in turn is a disservice to ourselves, our colleagues, and our students. We spend so much time developing policies, programs, and interacting with colleagues and students, that we often fail to think about how our work impacts our own personal lives and how to best balance them. Those of us in student affairs preach balance, yet we tend to be the worst at taking care of ourselves. In conducting this study, I realized that students are no different; however they have our support to help them to work through their issues. We encourage them to seek our assistance on multiple levels. On the flip side, we as student affairs professionals shy away from dealing with our own

vulnerabilities in our daily lives in an effort not to look weak or unprofessional. I would like to challenge us to take better care of ourselves, to be more open to supporting each other, and not to be afraid to seek help, just like we tell our students. After all, we are just as human as they are.

As I moved forward with this study, I immersed myself as much as possible into the study to get an idea of what my participants were experiencing. I browsed various chatting websites and Grindr and looked at the profiles that were posted. While reading the profiles, I saw many similarities in the profiles that were posted; however not all the profiles were the same. I saw profiles that were very explicit and forward in the sexual activities that they sought. These profiles included X-rated pictures and sexually explicit language. Participants often described themselves and described what they were looking for. I also saw profiles that indicated they were simply looking to meet new people and that they were open to whatever may happen. In addition, I saw profiles that talked about relationships and wanting something more meaningful. I noticed that I was able to search for specific traits in men that may be of interest to me, in addition to very specific locations throughout the United States. I was even more intrigued when I found out that anywhere I traveled, I was able to open Grindr and instantly could tell which gay men were just a few feet away from me. I felt empowered to know that there were others like me and that I was not alone. I felt that anywhere I traveled I could instantly make friends and have people to connect with. I felt that I instantly could connect with other gay men and know which bars are the best to go to and the safer areas of town to visit. I felt empowered, connected, happy, and proud to be a

part of the gay community. I understood how my participants felt and why the Internet and social media are resources that should be valued.

During the 20th anniversary of the Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Ally College Conference (MBLGTACC), which was hosted at Iowa State University, Rev. Dr., Jamie Washington talked about courage and what it really takes to do the things that others are afraid to do. Dr. Washington stated that “to do this work, one must have the courage to be bold and not afraid to put yourself at the forefront. Hence, I have the courage to tell you that I have been living with HIV since 1998. I didn’t wake up this morning knowing that I would tell you this and this is something that I’ve never said before in my other speaking engagements” (Washington, 2012). The crowd of 1700 students stood up in unison and offered a thunderous applause in support of Dr. Washington, in work, and his bravery and courage for taking a leap of faith and sharing something that is so personal to him. At that moment, after hearing and witnessing Dr. Washington’s true bravery and courage to reveal something about himself that is immensely personal, I truly understood and realized that courage comes in many different shapes and we all have this within us. Therefore, I believe that having courage means that you are not afraid to be vulnerable, because in that vulnerability, you have the ability to create change that is powerful and can impact others to listen, acknowledge, and move towards action.

In honoring my participants and having the courage to do such a study, I need to acknowledge my own struggles as a member of the gay community and how they relate to this study. As a member of the gay community, I have always struggled with my body image, more specifically my relationship with food and being overweight. Having been

overweight most of my life, I have always been under intense pressure to be thinner, so that I would be more accepted in the gay community. I have found it easier to find comfort in food, rather than deal with the unyielding pressures of fitting into a certain body image. The voices of the participants in this study represent the general concern within the gay community concerning body image and masculinity issues. Similar to the participants, I have felt the feeling of isolation and ridicule for not fitting the ideal body weight. Yet, I have also felt support and acceptance from those who are holistic in their thoughts and actions, regardless of their own personal struggles. It was not until I decided to go to counseling to work on my relationship with food that I became more confident in my own body and understood that I do not have to look a certain way, but I do care about being healthy, in whatever means and manner that looks and feels comfortable for me.

Similar to the participants in this study, I take a proactive role in my sexual health, which includes being responsible and making sure that I am tested on a regular basis. I found myself struggling with the fact that I did not have easy access to free HIV testing. Having to travel more than 40 minutes to get free testing was very cumbersome, especially with the schedule of balancing classes, work, and multiple papers and projects for academic work. I found it easier to bite the bullet and pay for the testing on campus, which cost \$25 each time. This in itself could be a deterrent for others, coupled with the inconvenient travel that is now required for free testing in the next largest city. Free HIV testing should be a regular service that is offered at the student health center for all students. I believe that if we want our students to be responsible, let us at least make testing easy and accessible for all.

In addition, similar to Collin, I am the survivor of sexual molestation. I have shared my experiences publically in the past, however I had to revisit my own struggles with this in my life when Collin revealed his sexual assault during his interview. His emotions during this interview greatly impacted me and helped me to understand that I am not alone and that others have been through similar issues as well. In addition, I see that everyone deals with their own experiences differently. I chose to forgive others and move on long, long ago. However, I do admit that it will never go away and will always contribute to who I am as a person.

There were many comments that the participants made during our time together that surprised me, and there were many things that I expected to hear from the participants and did so. The common experience that I identified from this study is that we are all human and we all have vulnerabilities. It is how we deal with those vulnerabilities that shape who we are as individuals. All of the participants in this study recognized their vulnerabilities and moved forward in various ways to deal with their own concerns to ensure their own happiness and survival. This takes courage, a sense of direction, a sense of self, and a sense of self love to move towards happiness and survival. With this study, I hope that others are able to have the courage to do the things that are important to them, the courage to be a voice for those who may not have a voice, and the courage to do the things that others may not be able to do.

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APPENDIX A

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA POSTINGS

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [casual encounters](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

Up for anything - m4m - 18 (Isu campus)

Date: 2011-09-23, 11:24PM CDT

Reply to:

please flag with care: [?]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

Just really horny and Im up for anything but making out and rimming. Id love to have my ass fucked. I'm 220 5'11 mildly hairy. Ill fuck anyone but you need to host and you must be ddf.

- Location: Isu campus
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, September 23).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [casual encounters](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

please flag with care: [2]

Want some fun - m4mw - 18 (Isu campus)

Date: 2011-09-24, 11:58AM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

[miscategorized](#)

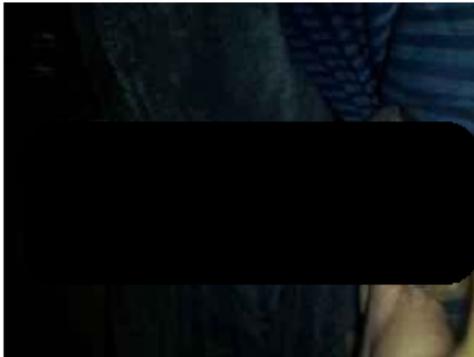
[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

Always have a hard dick. Ill fuck anyone who is ddf and can host. I'm free pretty much any weeknight. If you're a girl id love to pound your pussy. If you're a guy ill suck your cock you can suck mine. And I can penetrate you and you can penetrate me. I'm 220, 5'11 and mildly hairy with 6.5" c

- Location: Isu campus
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests



Unknown. (2011, September 24).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [casual encounters](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

I need to be picked up now - m4m - 18 (Isu campus)

Date: 2011-09-26, 1:43AM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [?]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

I'm really horny I want someone whose ddf and can come pick me up so we can fuck right now email me

- Location: Isu campus
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, September 26a).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [casual encounters](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

Looking for straight curious guys - m4m - 18 (ISU)

Date: 2011-09-26, 2:49PM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [2]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

Hey guys! I'm a straight college guy that is curious about doing something with another straight curious guy. Maybe start out with a massage and see where it goes from there. I am not able to host, so you have to, or know of a discreet place we can go to. Must be tall, fit, ddf, and clean. White Americans are preferred. Send stats and pics (face and cock) or no reply. Your pics get mine. Let's get somethin goin!

- Location: ISU
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, September 26b).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [men seeking men](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

where are all the guys? - 20 (Ames)

Date: 2011-09-29, 12:45AM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [?]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

looking for some (preferably college-aged) guys to chill out with, get to know, maybe something more. gay, str8, bi, curious can apply.

i'm 5'10, slim, an ISU student, and looking for some attractive friends!

e-mail me your stats and pics and let's kick it.

- Location: Ames
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, September 29).

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

ISU student - 19 (ames)

Date: 2011-10-05, 6:47PM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [?]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

Hey guys,

looking for someone hot and around me age (no older than 25) to hang out with and see what happens/ send a pic in the email with stats.

- Location: ames
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, October 5).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [men seeking men](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

please flag with care: [2]

Any other curious ISU Students? - 20 (ISU)

Date: 2011-10-08, 4:07PM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

Just an ISU student here looking for other ISU students who are curious. Never done anything before but I want to try. If your interested send me an email and we can see where things go. I have pics if you do.

- Location: ISU
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, October 8).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [casual encounters](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

ISU student looking - m4m - 20 (near campus)

Date: 2011-10-13, 12:00PM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [?]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

Hey guys, looking for some fun with another curious guy. Im 20, five eleven and 180. Im a Vers/top looking to meet up with someone and explore. Just let whatever happens happen. Looking for guys who are hwp and under 30. Get back at me so we can get something goin.

- Location: near campus
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, October 13).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [casual encounters](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities.

MWL residence halls - m4m - 18 (ISU)

Date: 2011-10-16, 4:13PM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [2]

[misategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

there's gotta be some gay guys in Maple, willow, or larch. im 18, and 5'11"

if uu live in MWL hit me up, w/body picture

- Location: ISU
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests



Unknown. (2011, October 16).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [casual encounters](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

ISU international student !! - m4m - 19 (Ames)

Date: 2011-10-23, 10:22PM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [?]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

Hi, I am asian, and have no experience with men b4, so trying to meet new people around my age.

I am not super hot. but I'm good looking and very kind, understanding.

Shoot me an email. and i will reply!!!

- Location: Ames
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, October 23).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [casual encounters](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

curious student looking for fun - 21 (ISU)

Date: 2011-10-31, 6:53PM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [2]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

I'm 21 and just transferred to ISU this semester... looking for fun with other curious guys here.

I'm ONLY looking for other college guys who are under 26. Please be attractive and in shape!

Send me a message if you wanna chat and see where it goes. Send pics too!

- Location: ISU
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests



Unknown. (2011, October 31).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [men seeking men](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities.

please flag with care: [?]

hot student looking for same - 21 (ISU)

Date: 2011-10-31, 7:07PM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

I'm 21 and looking for fun with other guys here at ISU. ONLY looking for other college guys... you must be attractive and in shape!

Send pics and tell me what you're looking for. I'm real... today is Halloween!!! Put "Halloween" in the subject line so I know you're real too.

- Location: ISU
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests



Unknown. (2011, October 31a).

[Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities](#)

ISU Freshman - m4m - 18 (Campus Dorms)

Date: 2011-10-31, 10:27PM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [?]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

Hey guys, looking to hang out and see where it goes from there. Looking for someone legit and not weird as hell. I'm attractive and you should be too. 18 yo, brown hair, blue/green eyes, 6', 160lbs. If you interested reply with a face pic and you'll get one back.

- Location: Campus Dorms
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, October 31b).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [men seeking men](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

where are the guys?? - 21 (Campustown)

Date: 2011-11-01, 10:09PM CDT

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [?]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

ISU student here, just looking to meet/talk to other gay/bi/curious guys that either go to school or are around my age.

Up for friends, fun and maybe more. Depends on the guy.

I'm 5'10, br/br, DDF and slender. Send a pic to get one (and to get a response). Also tell me your stats and a little about you.

- Location: Campustown
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, November 1).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [casual encounters](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities.

horny in the dorms - m4m - 18 (MWL halls)

Date: 2011-11-07, 7:22PM CST

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [2]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

Hey guys! Im in maple hall, 18 years old. not fat, but not skinny ~220. white. nice thick long dick.

i know there's some gay guys in MWL come on out... send a body pic and face pic. hmu..... looking for tonight!

- Location: MWL halls
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests



Unknown. (2011, November 7a).

[ames, IA craigslist](#) > [personals](#) > [casual encounters](#)

[email this posting to a friend](#)

Please report suspected exploitation of minors to the appropriate authorities

looking for other curious guys.. - m4m - 21 (Campustown)

Date: 2011-11-07, 7:27PM CST

Reply to:

[Reply To This Post](#)

please flag with care: [?]

[miscategorized](#)

[prohibited](#)

[spam/overpost](#)

[best of craigslist](#)

looking to chat with other bi/curious/closeted guys, maybe j/o or oral together too. i'm a 5'10, in shape student and have a thick 6.5 cock

will ONLY respond if u send pic and stats, then i will send my pic.

- Location: Campustown
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

Unknown. (2011, November 7b).

APPENDIX B

HOME PAGE OF WEBSITES

ADAM4ADAM

[JOIN FREE](#) [LIVE CAMS](#) [STORE](#) [PAYPERVIEW](#)

102,470 Guys Online!

Username:

Password:

Remember me

[Login](#)

[Forgot your password?](#)

Join FREE
Find your ADAM today!
Get FREE Full Access!

Mobile & Smart Phone Versions [Read More](#)

MOBILE

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RADAR webApp

radar.adam4adam.com

RADAR nativeApps

iPhone- iPad / Android

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GENERIC CIALIS
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(A4A, 2012)

English Español Français Português Deutsch Italiano

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Cruise. Chat. Connect.
Create a **free** account.

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Member name

Password

Remember me

[Forgot your password?](#)

LOGIN ▶

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(Online Buddies, 2012)

craigslist

post to classifieds
my account

search craigslist

for sale

event calendar

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14

help, faq, abuse, legal
avoid scams & fraud
personal safety tips
terms of use new
system status

about craigslist
craigslist blog
best-of-craigslist
craigslist TV
craig connects

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ames, IA ^w

nearby cl

ames
cedar rapids
des moines
dubuque
fort dodge
iowa city
kirksville
la crosse
lincoln
mankato
mason city
omaha
quad cities
rochester
sioux city
sioux falls
southeast ia
st joseph
waterloo
western il

us cities

us states

canada

cl worldwide

community

activities lost+found
artists musicians
childcare local news
general politics
groups rideshare
pets volunteers
events classes

personals

strictly platonic
women seek women
women seeking men
men seeking women
men seeking men
misc romance
casual encounters
missed connections
rants and raves

discussion forums

1099	gifts	pets
apple	haiku	philos
arts	health	politic
atheist	help	psych
autos	history	queer
beauty	housing	recover
bikes	jobs	religion
celebs	jokes	rofo
comp	kink	science
crafts	l.t.r.	shop
diet	legal	spirit
divorce	linux	sports
dying	loc pol	t.v.
eco	m4m	tax
educ	money	testing
etiquet	motocy	transg
feedbk	music	travel
film	npo	vegan
fitness	open	w4w
fixit	outdoor	wed
food	over 50	wine
frugal	p.o.c.	women
gaming	parent	words
garden	pefo	writers

housing

apts / housing
rooms / shared
sublets / temporary
housing wanted
housing swap
vacation rentals
parking / storage
office / commercial
real estate for sale

for sale

appliances	arts+crafts
antiques	auto parts
barter	baby+kids
bikes	beauty+hlth
boats	cars+trucks
books	cds/dvd/vhs
business	cell phones
computer	clothes+acc
free	collectibles
furniture	electronics
general	farm+garden
jewelry	garage sale
materials	household
nvs	motorcycles
sporting	music instr
tickets	photo+video
tools	toys+games
wanted	video gaming

services

beauty	automotive
creative	farm+garden
computer	household
cycle	labor/move
event	skill'd trade
financial	real estate
legal	sm biz ads
lessons	therapeutic
marine	travel/vac
pet	write/ed/tr8

jobs

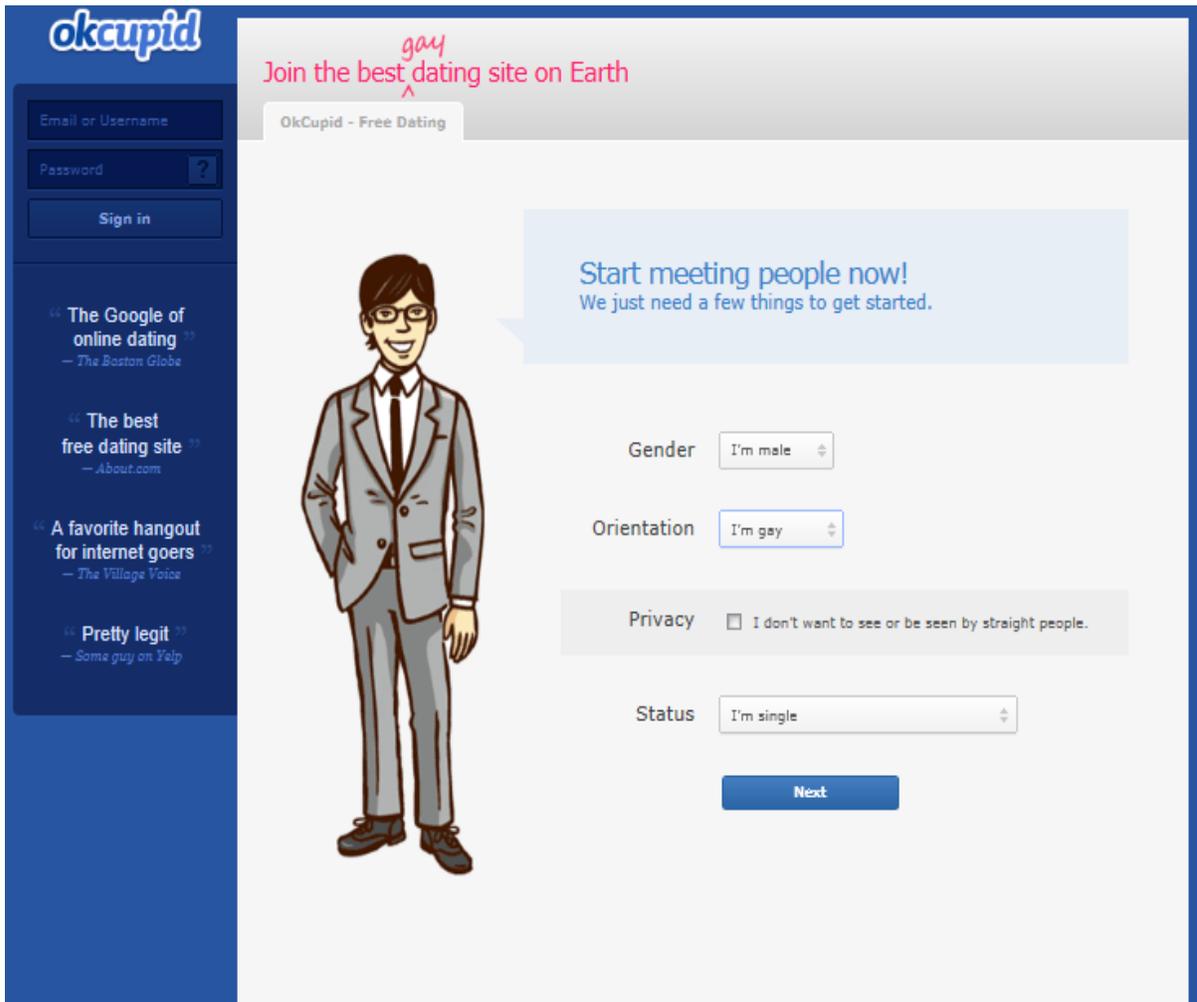
accounting+finance
admin / office
arch / engineering
art / media / design
biotech / science
business / mgmt
customer service
education
food / bev / hosp
general labor
government
human resources
internet engineers
legal / paralegal
manufacturing
marketing / pr / ad
medical / health
nonprofit sector
real estate
retail / wholesale
sales / biz dev
salon / spa / fitness
security
skilled trade / craft
software / qa / dba
systems / network
technical support
transport
tv / film / video
web / info design
writing / editing
[ETC]
[part-time]

gigs

crew computer
event creative
labor domestic
talent writing

resumes

(Craigslist, 2012)



(Humor Rainbow, 2012)

The screenshot shows the gay.com website interface. At the top, there are input fields for 'username' and 'password', and a 'LOGIN' button. To the right, there are links for 'help', 'JOIN FOR FREE', and 'JOIN AS PREMIUM!'. The main header features the 'gay.com' logo in blue and white, followed by the tagline 'ENCOUNTER. EXPERIENCE. ENJOY.' and '8543 Members Online Now'. Below the header is a navigation bar with buttons for 'CHAT', 'FIND MEMBERS', 'MY PROFILE', 'MY LISTS', and 'VIEW'. The main content area is divided into two sections. On the left, there is a large image of three men in a swimming pool, with one man in a blue inflatable ring. Below this image is the text 'OUT TRAVELER The Standard of Gay Travel' and a 'MORE' button with a play icon. On the right, there is a 'Sign In' section with a 'Forgot Password?' link, input fields for 'username' and 'password', an 'online status' dropdown menu set to 'Online', and a 'LOGIN' button. Below the sign-in section is a 'Not A Member?' section with 'SIGN UP!' and 'JOIN AS PREMIUM!' buttons. At the bottom right, there is a banner for 'I am gay.com' featuring two men, one holding a camera, and a 'JOIN NOW' button with a play icon.

(Here Media, 2012)

PLANETROMEO English (English) ▾

Home Help & Service About us Users Guide Clubs Escorts

User Login

Profile Name

Password

As last time ▾

Remember Me

G-Rated

Login

Forgot Password?
Activate SSL

Welcome to our Community

75 850
Users online worldwide

577
Hot local guys

Sign up here
It's quick & easy

We're different!
Just like you, we like guys! What began as a home-made website has grown into one of the biggest communities for gay, bisexual and transgender men on the Planet! Find out why for yourself.

We're in your area!
From horny hook-ups to the man of your dreams, find what you need with our powerful search engine. Free and unrestricted. You never know, Mr Right may be waiting just around the corner!

We're free to use!
All our important functions are free for everybody. Send unlimited messages. Check out as many profiles as you can. No strings attached. Sign up now and make our Planet yours.

(PlanetRomeo, 2012)

The screenshot displays the RealJock website interface. At the top left is the RealJock logo, a red circle with a white silhouette of a person running, next to the text "REALJOCK" in large bold letters and "GAY FITNESS HEALTH & LIFE" below it. To the right of the logo is a navigation bar with links: TOPICS | WORKOUT PLANS | FORUMS | SEARCH PROFILES | WHO'S ONLINE | WHO'S VERIFIED. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links: chat | mail (0) | profile & photos | buddy & other lists | preferences | account | help. At the bottom of the navigation bar are links: JOIN NOW | SIGN IN | 2,572 ONLINE NOW | SEARCH 333,515 PROFILES and a search input field with a SEARCH button.

Below the navigation bar is a "SIGN IN" section on the left with a form for "Member name:" and "Password:", a "Remember me" checkbox, and "SIGN IN" and "JOIN NOW" buttons. A "forget password?" link is also present.

To the right of the sign-in section is a "GAY FITNESS, HEALTH & LIFE" section with a red header. It contains a "WORKOUTS" tab, a "MEN OF THE DAY" tab, a "MUSIC" tab, and a "PROMO" tab. Under the "MEN OF THE DAY" tab, there is a "12-Week Workout Programs" section with a list of links: [Complete Strength Workout](#), [Muscle-Building Workout](#), [Strength Foundation Workout](#), and [View All 12-Week Workouts](#). To the right of this is a "MAN OF THE DAY CONTENDERS" section with three small images of muscular men.

(RealJock, 2012)

English | Français | Deutsch | Español | Italiano | Português | Nederlands | 日本語 | Ελληνικά

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WHAT YOU WANT, WHEN YOU WANT IT

Profile Name Password Sign In

Forgot password? Secure Sign In

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(QSoft Consulting, 2012)

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Latest Blog

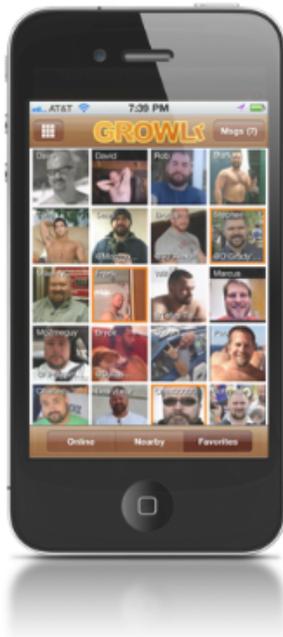
Download for BlackBerry

Download for Android

Download for iPhone (iPad & iPod touch)

(Grindr, 2012)

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The Bear Social Network

GROWLr is the complete social networking app for gay bears. And it's FREE. With over 400,000 GROWLr members, you can view profiles from around the world or right in your own neighborhood. Send and receive private messages, pictures, or voice memos. Complete and up-to-date bear run and bear bar listings. Checkin features, notes and more.

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(Initech, 2012)



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(Perry Street Software, 2012)

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study:**Sexual encounters: Gay male college students' use of the Internet and social media****Investigators:** Rinardo Reddick

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore tricking (hooking up) by gay male college students and its implications on gay male health practices. This research should add to the limited literature in this area in hopes of engaging student affairs and academic professionals in the crucial conversations that should be taking place about the sexual and emotional health of the gay male college student population. In addition, this study will also provide information that can be used in educating and advocating for additional resources for this population of students. These may include personal safety measures and the promotion of safer sex practices including the use of condoms and lubricants to use during sexual intercourse. The findings from this study may be used to educate and advocate for the necessary resources needed for this population of students, including that of health education, relationship building and safer use of the Internet and social media to facilitate tricking.

You are being invited to participate in this study because you identify as a male who participates in male-male sexual activities. You should not participate in this study if you are under the age of 18 years old.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, you are requested to sign the informed consent document, to complete a short demographic questionnaire, and return both to the researcher. Within a few days, the researcher may ask you to participate in 1-3 interviews. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes. A second and/or third interview will take place as needed to ensure that all questions were covered. Interviews will be audio recorded. Each interview should take place one to two weeks after the prior interview. After I have completed all interviews, you will be invited to review preliminary results of the study and to provide feedback if you wish.

RISKS

You may find it inconvenient to make time for the interview. Interviews will be held at a time and place as convenient as possible for you and last no longer than necessary. You may also feel uncomfortable talking about certain topics during the interview. You do not have to

answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable, and you may end the interview at any time. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and if you withdraw, all recordings, field notes, and other materials related to you will be destroyed.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study, you may enjoy the experience of talking about yourself and your experiences, but there may not be any direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by generating understanding about the role of tricking, which can be useful to others who experience similar encounters as well as academic and student affairs professionals at institutions of higher education.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will not have any costs from participating in this study, except for a possible charge from your phone company for calling the researcher, if necessary. Any cost may be avoided by arranging with the researcher by email to call you, if needed. You will not be compensated financially for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information, although participants' names will not be included to protect your confidentiality.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken. Interview transcripts will be kept in password-protected computer file and they will not contain any identifying information. Audio recordings of the interviews will be erased after they are transcribed. Printed transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet within a locked office at Iowa State University. Information for the study will be retained until the completion of the study. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- Due to the nature of this study it is to the participants benefit to be aware of the various resources at your disposal as a student at Iowa State University. If at any point during this study you feel the need for counseling, you may contact the Student Counseling Services at 515-294-5056. In addition, another useful resource to consider is the Prevention Services Department at Thielen Student Health Center. The contact number for Prevention Services is 515-294-1868.
- For further information about the study contact Rinardo Reddick by phone at 515-294-4143 or by email at m4mstudy@iastate.edu or Daniel Robinson by phone at 515-294-8182.
- If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You shall retain or be given a copy of this written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's Name (printed) _____

(Participant's Signature)

(Date)

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

M4M Study

ISU IRB # 1	11-392
Approved Date:	28 September 2011
Expiration Date:	5 September 2012

Hello Participant,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study regarding gay male college students tricking in college. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by generating understanding about the role of tricking, which can be useful to others including higher educational professionals, academic professionals, gay and lesbian organizations, family therapists, family scholars, and family practitioners.

Attached is an informed consent document that explains the study to you in a bit more detail. I will need you to sign the informed consent document to indicate that you understand what the study is about and what your involvement will be before we can schedule an interview. In addition to the informed consent document, there is a short questionnaire for you to complete and return to me as well.

If you prefer that I mail or fax you a hard copy of the informed consent document and questionnaire, please reply with an address or fax number to which I should send them. I will keep your address and all other information that you provide during the study with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you,

Rinaldo Reddick
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
Iowa State University

*Adapted from (Zimmerman, 2012)

Demographic Questionnaire

ISU IRB # 1	11-392
Approved Date:	28 September 2011
Expiration Date:	5 September 2012

Questionnaire*

This is a short questionnaire for you to complete and return with your signed informed consent document. Your participation is entirely voluntary and your completion of the questionnaire indicates that you agree to participate in this part of the study. Your responses will remain strictly confidential. Your participant number will be randomly assigned to you. If you are completing this questionnaire on the computer, click in the grey fields to type, and double-click on the boxes you which to check and select “checked” for an ‘X’ to appear in the box. Otherwise, you may write your responses by hand.

1. Participant Number: ___
2. Gender (Check one.)
 - male
 - female
 - intersex
3. Year of birth: _____ (e.g., 1971)
4. Which city do you live in? _____ (e.g., Ames)
5. Relationship status (Check one.)
 - single
 - partnered
 - married
- 6a. Are you Hispanic or Latino (Check one).
 - No
 - Yes (If ‘Yes,’ check one below and skip 6 b).
 - Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano
 - Central American
 - South American
 - Hispanic Other
- 6b. What is your race/ethnicity? (Check one or more).

<input type="checkbox"/> Asian American	<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian
<input type="checkbox"/> Native American	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> African American	

7. Please indicate your current student classification education: (Check one).
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 st year student | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 th + year student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd year student | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 rd year student | |
8. Please check the box next to the number that you think best represents your sexual attractions. (Check one.)
- 0- Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual
 - 1- Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual
 - 2- Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
 - 3- Equally heterosexual and homosexual
 - 4- Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
 - 5- Predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual
 - 6- Exclusively homosexual
 - X-Asexual
9. Have you ever participated in tricking activities?
- yes
 - no
10. If you have participated in tricking activities, how long ago was your last encounter?
- less than 7 days
 - 8 - 14 days
 - 15 – 30 days
 - more than 30 days

When you have completed the questionnaire, please return with your signed informed consent document.

Thank you!

Interview Questions*

This is study about tricking. For purposes of this study, I have defined “trick” or “tricking” as engaging in sexual activity with someone with whom you had no romantic or emotional attachment. Furthermore, “trick” can also be defined as the person with whom you engaged in the sexual encounter with. In addition, for the purposes of this study, I have defined “MM” sex as male on male sex.

Interview questions consist of four “grand tour” questions. Not all of the questions need be asked, as the participants may cover the general questions during the interview. The bulleted questions may be used as probes if the information is not forthcoming after posing the broader questions. Note: It is impossible to anticipate every possible question that I may need to ask during an interview, but these serve as the types of questions I will be asking.

1. Have you had a tricking encounter as I define it?
 - (If asked, explain that for the purposes of this study sexual activity includes any heavy petting (fondling of nipples or genitals) and oral and/or anal sex.

If they qualify:

2. I'll begin by asking you a series of questions about tricking, and then at the end I'll ask you a few questions about your background. Do you have any questions before we continue?

Use of Internet/Social Media

Have you ever used chatting websites to facilitate a tricking encounter?

What percentage of the time does your tricking encounter start without use of the Internet?

What percentage of the time does your tricking encounter start with contact from one of these websites?

What percentage of the time do you make plans to meet someone off the Internet, but the plans fall through on your part?

What percentage of the time do you make plans to meet someone off the Internet, but the plans fall through on their part?

Have you ever used Gay.com, Manhunt.com, Adam4Adam.com, or Craigslist.com to facilitate a tricking encounter?

- Do you have a profile on Gay.com, Manhunt.com or Adan4Adam.com?
- Do you indicate or elude that you are looking for a trick in your profile?
- Do you post any nude or sexually suggestive pictures of yourself in your profile?
- Do you post a picture showing your face in your profile?
- Have you ever posted an ad on Craigslist.com to solicit a tricking encounter?
- Do you post any nude or sexually suggestive pictures of yourself in your Craigslist.com ad?
- Do you post a picture showing your face in your Craigslist.com ad?

Most recent tricking encounter

I want to ask you about the last person you tricked with. How many times did you trick with him?

How did you know the guy you tricked with?

How did you meet him? For how long did you know him prior to the trick?

What attracted you to him? In other words, why did you want to trick with this particular person?

How important is body image to you in selection of a trick? Why?

Do you feel that you are pressured to have a certain look or appearance in the gay community?

What sexual role do you normally take in tricking encounters? Top, bottom, versatile?

How does that role effect your decision of what happens sexually during the encounter? Do you feel you have a greater say in use of protection?

How did you end up tricking? Can you describe in detail the events that led up to the trick? In other words, where were you and your trick the day or night of the tricking encounter? What were you doing? How did things progress to the sexual intimacy? How did you know that you were going to be sexually intimate with him?

Where did the tricking encounter actually occur?

How long would you say that the sexual activity lasted?

What kind of sexual activity took place?

Did you talk about the level of sexual intimacy with which you were both comfortable? If so, what did you say? If not, how did you know what level of intimacy was comfortable for you and trick?

Do you believe that alcohol (or drugs) played a role in this tricking encounter?

- If so: Did this affect your ability or your his ability to determine how far to go?
- Do you believe you would have tricked if you were sober?
- Did you get drunk/high with the intention of tricking?
- Did you attempt to get him drunk/high with the intention of tricking?
- Did either of you use protection against STDs – such as a condom -- during the tricking encounter? What did you use? Why didn't you use a condom?
- Did you think that your trick might have an STD? Why or why not?
- IF RELEVANT: Did you think that it was safe to have unprotected (oral sex or anal sex... whatever they did) with him? Why?
- Did you tell anyone about your tricking encounter? If so, who? What did you tell them? (Encourage them to elaborate and to use the same words w/ you that they used w/ their friends.) How did they respond? Did you tell anyone the name of your trick? If so, who? How did they respond? Why do you think that they responded this way?

Tricking in general

Why do you participate in tricking?

What is the best thing about tricking?

What is the worst thing about tricking?

Do you think that you'd ever participate in tricking again? Why or why not?

How many times have you tricked over the last year?

With how many different people have you tricked with?

How frequently do you trick during an average month?

- What are the qualities that you look for in a trick? What's important to you, in terms of choosing a trick?
- What sexual activities do you do when you trick?
- What percentage of guys who participate in MM sex do you think trick up on campus?
- What do your friends think of tricking?

STD worries and tricking

If you have been tested for HIV or any other STD via the student health center?

How convenient are these services for you?

Are there resources that are one campus that you feel help you engage in safer sexual practices?

Are there resources on campus that you feel are missing for gay male students?

How frequently do you or your partner use a condom when you have anal sex while tricking? Why? What determines whether or not you or your trick will use a condom?

How often do you or your trick use a condom when you have oral sex during tricking? Why? What determines whether or not you or your trick will use a condom?

- Have you ever been worried about exposure to HIV/AIDS or another sexually transmissible infection after a trick? Why or why not? What did you do about your concerns? Did you go to a health clinic to get tested for HIV or any other STD?
- Have you ever been tested for HIV or any other sexually transmissible infection? If so, for what were you tested? Where did you go for testing? How easy or difficult was it for you to go for testing? Did you receive the results of your tests in a timely manner?
- If you have been tested for HIV or any other STD, how often do you do this? How often do you think that it would be optimal for you to do this? Why?

Personal Safety and tricking

What safety measures do you take when meeting a trick to protect yourself from potential harm?

What safety measures do you take when using social media to chat to and potentially meet tricks?

*Adapted from (Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009)

Recruitment message

Hello [Name],

I am a doctoral student of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University. I am doing my dissertation research on gay male college students and tricking (hooking up by men with other men). This study has been approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects. Please pass this along to anyone who may be interested.

Participants qualify IF:

- The male experiences same-sex attractions or behavior, regardless of self-identification.
- The male is a current university student.
- The male currently participates in tricking.
- The male is at least 18 years of age or older.

The participants' current relationship status is not important in this study. Participants are encouraged to live in the Ames, Iowa local community.

Participants will be asked to sign an informed consent document and to complete a short demographic questionnaire. I plan to interview each participant at least 2 times, with a potential for a 3rd interview if necessary. Most interviews will be held in person, if possible. Interviews will last approximately 75-90 minutes. After I have completed my interviews, participants will be invited to review a preliminary analysis of the results and to provide feedback if they wish.

Participant identity will be kept strictly confidential. Digital transcripts will be kept in password-protected computer files. Printed transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office until the end of the study. Audio recordings will be deleted after transcription. Pseudonyms will be assigned to participants on the transcripts.

Those interested in participating in the study can contact me by email at m4mstudy@iastate.edu. To ensure participant confidentiality, respondents should indicate how they wish to be contacted.

Thank you for your time!

Rinaldo Reddick
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
Iowa State University

Email response to those who express interest in participating*

Hello [Name],

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study regarding gay male college students tricking in college. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by generating understanding about the role of tricking, which can be useful to others including higher educational professionals, academic professionals, gay and lesbian organizations, family therapists, family scholars, and family practitioners.

Attached is an informed consent document that explains the study to you in a bit more detail. I will need you to sign the informed consent document to indicate that you understand what the study is about and what your involvement will be before we can schedule an interview. Following the informed consent document is a short questionnaire for you to complete and return to me as well.

If you prefer that I mail or fax you a hard copy of the informed consent document and questionnaire, please reply with an address or fax number to which I should send them. I will keep your address and all other information that you provide during the study with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you,

Rinardo Reddick
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
Iowa State University

*Adapted from (Zimmerman, 2012)

Email stating that I am unable to accept more participants*

Hello [Name],

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study regarding gay male college students tricking in college. I have received more volunteers than needed, so I am no longer accepting participants for the present study.

Thanks again, and all the best!

Rinardo Reddick
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
Iowa State University

*Adapted from (Zimmerman, 2012)