USING MASCULINITY SOCIALIZATION TO EXPLAIN GAY, BISEXUAL,

AND HETEROSEXUAL MEN'S SEXUAL SELF-SCHEMAS

by

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ABSTRACT

This research describes the male sexual self-schema, or the way men conceptualize their sexual identity. The study uses as its basis Brooks' five-theme description of heterosexual male sexuality referred to as "The Centerfold Syndrome," namely, voyeurism, objectification, the need for validation, trophyism, and the fear of true intimacy. Self-schemas derive from past experience, affect current experiences, and facilitate the processing of sexual information. Using these concepts, this study addressed the question: how do men understand their own sexual self-schemas? Perspectives 20 gay, 20 bisexual men, and 20 heterosexual men were drawn together using a grounded theory methodology. In addition, 29 of the interviewees participated in three focus-group discussions to confirm the relevance of the evolving model with their experiences. These men discussed elements of relationships with men, relationships with women, and also attitudes about themselves that contribute to their ideas about sexuality. A detailed model emerged that depicted the behaviors and attitudes participants experienced as part of the male script. Additionally, men discussed the situations that caused them to consider reconstruction of these schemas. The resulting model may be used by clinicians to conceptualize men's presenting problems, as well as plan treatment that produces the most benefit and the least harm to male clients.

To my parents in academe, Gary Brooks and Sue Morrow, for their

guidance.

To my parents in life, Claybourne and Elizabeth Elder, for their love.

To my sister, Maura Carabello, for her generosity.

To my partner, Brandon Sakota, for his patience.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There has been a recent expansion of research examining the psychology of men and masculinity (Brooks & Good, 2001). These studies have yielded primarily psychologically based conceptualizations of masculinity rather than investigations of biologically determined sex-based characteristics. As a result, models have been developed that describe male gender role socialization toward physical aggression, toughness, and status seeking (Good & Sherrod, 2001), as well as avoidance or denial of emotional experience (Levant, Richmond, Majors, Inclan, Rosell, Rowan, & Sellers, 2003).

Increasing evidence demonstrates that traditional male gender roles have been associated with many negative intrapersonal and interpersonal difficulties. Research has established correlations between adherence to aspects of traditional masculinity (such as men who restrict their feelings, restrict their affections towards other men, and struggle with work and family conflicts) and numerous psychological problems for men. These findings suggest that a greater adherence to aspects of traditional masculinity results in significantly greater depression (Cochran & Rabinowitz, 2000; Lynch & Kilmartin, 1999; Reale, 1997), even across diverse racial (Brewer, 1998; Fragoso & Kashabeck, 2000), sexual orientation (Jones, 1998; Simonsen, Blazina, & Watkins, 2000), and cross cultural

samples of men (Hayashi, 1999; Jo, 2000). Hegemonic masculinity has also been linked to anxiety (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Mertens, 2000, 2001), stress (Good, Heppner, DeBord, & Fischer, 2004; Fragoso & Sahubeck, 2000), and psychological well-being (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991; Sharpe, Heppner, & Dixon, 1995). To maintain interpersonal power, men hide their feelings of self doubt, which produces a positive correlation between aspects of masculinity and negative self-esteem (Kim, Choi, Ha, & O'Neil, 2006; Mahalik, Locke, Theodore, Cournoyer, & Lloyd, 2001; Schwartz, Waldo, Bloom-Langell, & Merta, 1998), alexithymia (Fischer & Good, 1997; Levant, 1995), shame (McMahon, Winkel, & Luthar, 2000; Thompkins & Rando, 2003), and alcohol/substance use and abuse (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Fahey, 2003; King, 2001). In terms of interpersonal difficulties that are correlated with the traditional gender role, complex and significant findings were discovered between gender role adherence and measures of attachment, separation, individuation problems (Blazina & Watkins, 2000), attachment quality (Fischer, in press), attachment styles (Cachia, 2001; Schwartz, Bublotz, Seeman, & Flye, 2004), and identity development (Napolitano, Mahalik, & Kenny, 1999). This leads to a proliferation of marital problems and decreased marital satisfaction (Alexander, 1999; Brewer, 1998), as well as difficulties in parenting (Alexander, 1999; Scott, 2001) and other problems.

Despite the increase in research, one area of the psychology of men and masculinity that has remained relatively unexamined is the crossroads where masculinity and sexuality meet. Although there has been some effort to discover the process through which men learn sexual behavior (Eliason, 1995; Sullivan, 1998; Worthington, Savoy, Dillon, & Vernaglia, 2002), little is known about the schemas that make up their

sexuality overall. This lack of knowledge perpetuates limited awareness of the force and centrality of sexuality in their lives, preventing men from recognizing sexual risks (such as unsafe sex), vulnerabilities (such as sexual compulsivity), and the ways men are affected by media representations of male desire (Zuckerman & Myers, 1983). There is no clear path for men to identify parts of their sexuality that may be harmful to mental health. Therefore, it is of significant importance to investigate male sexual orientation identity and, if possible, to raise awareness among men (Frankel, 2004) and those who provide mental health services to them, such as psychologists and counselors.

Most of the research examining aspects of traditional masculine gender role socialization and mental health has focused on presumably heterosexual men. Our understanding of gay men's experience with masculinity is limited (Sanchez, Vilain, Westefeld, Liu, 2010). However, national and international studies within various samples of men have found rates of men who self-identify as gay to range from 1.6% to 5.9% (Bagley & Tremblay, 1998; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michales, 1994; Smith, Rissel, Richters, Grulich, & de Visser, 2003); and same-sex sexual behavior among men has been found to range from 2.7% to 9.8% (Council on Scientific Affairs, AMA, 1996; Johnson, Wadsworth, Wellings, Bradshaw, & Field, 1995; Laumann et al., 1994). If the percentage of gay men in research studies conducted thus far matches the percentage of gay men in the general population, then the vast majority of men participating in masculinity studies so far have been nongay and heterosexual. Thus, the need to include gay men in these studies seems all the more pressing (Simonson, Blazina, & Watkins, 2000). In addition, bisexual men have been even more neglected in the literature on

masculinity and in studies of sexuality in general (Pennington, 2009). Thus, research is needed to bring gay and bisexual men into the overall picture of men and masculinity.

The majority of studies on male sexuality to date also lack the particularities of bisexuality. Many studies combine all men who have sex with men (MSM) into one category, glossing over sexuality differences that distinguish bisexual men. Typically, primacy is given to gay men's issues, and the sexual identities, behaviors, and attractions of bisexual men are blurred or ignored. As a result, psychological studies have produced even less understanding about bisexuality than gayness or homosexuality.

Additionally, most of the masculinity research on gay and bisexual men has ignored the influence of gender role socialization, perhaps because of stereotypes of gay and bisexual men as effeminate and unaffected by gender ideals (Madon, 1997). Studies of gay and bisexual men focus instead on relationships between external and internalized heterosexism and psychosocial distress (Herek, Cogan, Gillis, & Glunt, 1998; Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999; Meyer, 1995). Yet, any reading of literature about gay and bisexual men and their struggles reveals that masculinity socialization difficulties (issues of emotional disclosure, affectionate expression, being at odds with society's prescribed view, increased isolation, etc.) have as much relevance for the gay and bisexual as for the heterosexual experience (D'Augelli, 1993; Hart, Roback, Tittle, Weitz, Walson, & McKee, 1978; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993; Simonsen, Blazina, & Watkins, 2000; Szymanski & Carr, 2008). This is presumably the case for bisexual men as well. Although gay men experience unique issues attending their sexual orientation and in general are as a group more gender nonconforming than heterosexual men (Bailey & Zucker, 1995), how a sexual minority male constructs his notion of masculinity is likely

to influence his sexuality and his attitudes and feelings about sexual relationships (Szymanski & Carr, 2008). Because of the paucity of research on bisexual men and their gender conformity or nonconformity, the literature is notably silent on their experiences.

Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Sexual Orientation Identity

Before providing the necessary background research regarding masculinity and sexuality, some preliminary remarks regarding the relationship between sexual orientation and gender are necessary. This will lay the groundwork for discussion of masculinity as a separate concept from sexual orientation identity and underpin a greater analysis of the effects of gender performance on sexual orientation identity. First, *gender* has been roughly defined as a combination of characteristics and identities that represent social division and a cultural distinction. How gender is lived varies historically and culturally with considerable variability in the content of gender expression (Delphy, 1993).

Second, just as a complex set of biological and cultural factors determine a person's gender identity, sexual orientation is also a construct formed of constructed and essential elements. *Sexual orientation* refers to an individual's sexual attraction to women, men, or both (Bailey, 2003). The term *sexual orientation* may more accurately be viewed as shorthand for sexual and affectional orientation (Shively & De Cecco, 1993). Although traditionally sexual orientation has been seen along a bipolar scale with heterosexuality at one end and homosexuality at the other, with bisexuality in the middle of the continuum (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953), there are multiple dimensions to a person's sexual orientation, including sexual attraction, desire, fantasy, feelings of romantic love, actual sexual behaviors and history,

relationship history, community of support, patterns of intimacy, and even political affiliations (Fassinger, 2000). Further, an individual may have periods of his or her life when he or she has one sexual orientation, then another, or an individual may have a more enduring orientation (Keys, 2002; Mock & Eibach, 2012).

Third, *sexual orientation identity* relates to the way in which an individual defines her or his sexual orientation. The term *sexual identity* has typically been used to describe sexual orientation identity; however, properly used, *sexual identity* refers to one's identity regarding the full range of human sexual behavior (Moradi, Mohr, Worthington, & Fassinger, 2009). The terms *heterosexual, bisexual,* and *homosexual* have been used consistently over time, but although they may provide a somewhat accurate description of sexual orientations, they often do not adequately express sexual orientation identities. *Heterosexuality* describes the orientation of being sexually or affectionally attracted to a person of the opposite sex, and *homosexuality* is the term that has been used over time to describe people whose sexual and affectional orientations are toward individuals of the same sex. *Bisexual* women and men are individuals whose sexual and affectional orientations are toward both women and men.

Within everyday interactions, the attribution of gender generally has primacy over sexual orientation identity in that we recognize someone as male or female before we make assumptions about heterosexuality or homosexuality (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). This is, in part, because we must determine an individual's gender before we can see whether an individual is attracted to the same or another gender. This common thought process is based on the equation of masculinity with heterosexuality. In fact, heterosexuality and masculinity are so linked that they are considered synonymous; a

phenomenon that Pronger (1990) calls *heteromasculinity*. But gender cannot easily be mapped onto sexuality. To do so would be to reduce the complexities of both sexuality and gender expression. The fact that not all heterosexual men are stereotypically, or heterosexually, masculine and that gay men demonstrate a wide range of masculinities suggests that connections between gender and sexual orientation should be neither presupposed nor neglected (Jackson, 2006). An example of this oversimplification can be seen in numerous studies conducted on masculinity and femininity in gay men where the primary question in is some version of the assumption that gay men are less masculine than heterosexual men. A great deal of research intertwines sexual orientation with gender roles, reinforcing the stereotype that homosexuality is seen as a gender role violation (Moradi, Mohr, Worthington, & Fassinger, 2009; Rees-Turyn, Doyle, Holland, & Root, 2008). However, masculinity is a multidimensional phenomenon, which becomes especially clear when we take ethnicity and social class, as well as sexual orientation, into account to see that there are many different masculinities.

As masculinities vary by culture, so does sexual orientation identity expression. Homosexuality and heterosexuality should not be thought of as simply a form of sexual expression, but also a key site of intersection between gender and sexuality. Whether men are sexually attracted to males, females, or both, they are affected by powerful beliefs about how to be a man (Schwartzberg & Rosenberg, 1995). Sexual orientation identity is an intersection that reveals the interconnections between sexual and nonsexual aspects of social life (Jackson, 2006). Although these dimensions are interrelated, they cut across each other as well as interlock; it is impossible to view them separately, or all at once. Thus, sexuality and gender are separate constructs that exist within social contexts;

however, the study of male sexuality examines how masculinity affects the expression of sexuality.

<div style="text-align: center;">The Sexual Self-schema</div>

Having discussed how these identities are interrelated, what do we know about the link between masculinity and sexuality? Gagnon and Simon (1973) underlined the importance of cognitive factors in male sexual beliefs, as well as the notion of intrapsychic, interpersonal, and cultural sexual scripts. Later, Barbara Andersen (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994; Andersen, Cyranowski, & Espindle, 1999) proposed the concept of sexual self-schema, or the way that individuals conceptualize their sexual orientation identity. These schemas are derived from past experience, guide current experiences, and help in the processing of sexual information (Markus, 1977). Andersen and Cyranowski (1994) proposed that sexual self-schemas result from making inferences about one's sexuality based on observations of one's own sexual behavior, sexual emotions and arousal, and sexual attitudes and beliefs. This sexual self-view, or sexual schema, is defined as a cognitive generalization about sexual aspects of the self. A sexual self-schema is derived from past experience, manifest in current experience, and influential in the processing of sexually relevant social information; it also gives guidance for sexual behavior (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994). As with other self-schemas, the sexual self-schema is formed by individual experiences, including external cues or signals and the way one responds to such cues (Myers & Biocca, 1992).

The research of Anderson et al. showed that sexual self-schemas can predict important outcomes such as sexual adjustment and the number of sexual partners an

individual may have, which may influence sexual health. Additionally, research has suggested that men have sexual schemas that guide their sexual behavior, including internal knowledge or cognitive frameworks that moderate the relationship between external social stimuli and behavioral reactions. Preliminary descriptions of sexual self-schemas of traditional heterosexual men show that they are generally sexually experienced, with a high frequency of sexual relationships, some of which occur without commitment. The sexual arousal these men report suggest that this sexual behavior is reinforced (Andersen et al., 1999).

To date, sexual self-schema research has made use of many sexual behavior checklists and questionnaires that ask respondents to describe their sexual experiences or report on their sexual activities. Unfortunately, questionnaires have proven problematic in sufficiently conceptualizing male sexuality. One of the most commonly used of these scales is the Sexual Self-schema Scale (Anderson, Cyranowski, & Espindle, 1999), which has been found to be an inconsistent measure in defining the relationship between sexual self-schema and behavior (Rushton, 2002). This and other measures of sexual schemas have the potential to induce defensive responding, may not be applicable to individuals who are not sexually active, and exclude potentially informative unstructured data collection. Research methods that focus on behavior alone, as opposed to sexual orientation identity and feelings, may not capture data from individuals who delay their first sexual experience until they are more mature or are grappling with sexual orientation identity (Bybee, Sullivan, Zielonka, & Moes, 2009). Additionally, these studies have primarily targeted heterosexual college-age men (with a mean age of 20) and have not thoroughly probed male sexuality of a wide spectrum of sexual orientations, ages, and

backgrounds. Examination of race, class, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious orientation, nationality, and other variables may provide rich insight into the formation of male sexual self-schemas.

Another difficulty specific to the Andersen, Cyranowski, and Espindle (1999) study of male sexual self-schemas is that these men do not describe sexuality in their own words. Rather, the investigation consists of trait adjective ratings. These data also do not adequately reflect the role of socialization in the formation of sexual self-schemas, nor do they incorporate men's experiences of sexuality. Finally, there are no negative factors mentioned in this outline of men's sexuality, because it appeared that men were reluctant to endorse negative traits.

Beyond the reliance on heterosexual, undergraduate male samples and the formulaic data gathering, another weakness in research on sexual self-schemas is the lack of empirical work by researchers other than Andersen and her colleagues. It appears that the sexual self-schema concept is yet in its infancy, and there is much that could be revealed through a qualitative investigation of this concept. This type of research could be conducted with both sexually experienced and inexperienced individuals.

The Centerfold Syndrome

Although the exact composition of men's sexual schema is not fully understood, there is a great body of research outlining the forces at play in men's sexual socialization. The gender role strain paradigm proposed by Pleck (1981, 1995) provides a framework in which the relationship between traditional masculinity and sexual socialization may be understood. Thompson and Pleck (1986) suggested that the structure of traditional

masculinity ideology consists of three sets of norms: toughness, success status, and anti-femininity. According to the gender role strain paradigm, the rigidity of these socially constructed masculinity ideologies gives rise to male gender role strain (Pleck, 1995). As men have difficulty living up to the masculine standards they have internalized, discrepancy strain occurs. This discrepancy produces what is often referred to as gender role conflict: a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others (O'Neil, Good, & Holms, 1995; O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986). Gender role conflict is correlated with negative psychological functioning, such as negative effects on relationship intimacy and satisfaction because it includes attitudes and behaviors that are harmful to interpersonal relationships (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). Men who experience high levels of gender role conflict may also be less emotionally expressive, thus reducing relationship intimacy. Pleck (1995) later described that only through traumatic male socialization can men bend themselves psychologically to the ideal standards of traditional masculinity, although this may be accompanied by long-term detriment. In other words, chronic psychic wounding caused by harsh punishment and rejection for behavior outside of the male gender role script is the process by which traditional masculinity is born.

Indeed, the masculine socialization process can be traumatizing (Lisak, 2001). Hegemonic male role expectations have inherently negative results for men and/or others (conflict managing work and family, emotional withdrawal, depression, loneliness, etc.). Increasingly, the characteristics associated with femininity are equated with healthy adults (i.e., "relational," "intimate," "connected") (Bergman, 1991; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991). This is an interesting contrast to research in the 1970s

indicating a bias on the part of psychotherapists to equate the "healthy man" with the "healthy human," but to view the "healthy female" as something quite different (Broverman & Broverman, 1977). Masculinity is structured to be equated with the opposite of femininity (Kimmel, 1995), and thus men may feel that their roles should disassociate from the traits that would help them lead healthy, happy lives.

The negative effects of traditional male socialization are especially relevant to the area of sexuality. Although there are no models that outline possible component themes of gay or bisexual men's sexuality, in his book, *The Centerfold Syndrome*, Brooks (1995) outlined the five heterosexual male sexual self-schemas he observed in over 30 years of counseling men of diverse backgrounds. The premise behind Brooks' thesis is that there are highly dysfunctional aspects of these sexual schemas that make it difficult for heterosexual men to establish emotionally intimate relationships and experience sexually gratifying lives. He described a constellation of five interconnected schemas comprising traditional heterosexual male sexuality: *voyeurism, objectification, the need for validation, trophyism,* and *the fear of true intimacy and engulfment*. Empirical evidence regarding these themes for heterosexual, gay, and bisexual men is described in greater detail below.

Voyeurism

The *Voyeurism* aspect of the Centerfold Syndrome is characterized by men's addiction to looking at bodies and images. *Voyeurism* is exacerbated by the omnipresence of women's and men's bodies displayed as sexually provocative, both in mass media and the widespread availability of pornography. Pornography is central to generating and

regenerating the power that maintains men in a position of viewing bodies as sexually provocative.

Pornography and efforts to display bodies systematically (Mulvey, 1975; Quinn, 2002) maintain these sexualized men and women both at a distance and in the ultimate position of validating masculinity. Because men cannot have the desired relationship with the women and men they see (either a romantic and/or sexual relationship), this inability to avoid looking creates anxiety and a sense of disempowerment. In an effort to control and acquire a relationship with the body they see, masturbation may give a brief relief and illusion of control. Masturbation may also serve to classically condition men to an addiction to looking because the orgasm has a conditioning effect on sexual arousal and masturbatory fantasies (Lande, 1980). Masturbation reinforces not only an addiction to looking, but it becomes the conditioned response, providing a sense of relief and control over frustration to connect physically and romantically (Das, 2007).

However, the eventual return of the frustrated desire teaches men to dominate, sexualize, and emotionally avoid the object of their sexual desire in order to win manliness and power. The exercise of abusive power is central to pornography, both to the sexual domination of the bodies depicted, but also to the process of objectification inherent in the creation and the use of pornography (Cowburn & Pringle, 2000). Men's abusive power through pornography is one of the most "normalized" and openly visible forms of men's sexual violence in our society. Because of this "normality" and frequent use, addressing pornography is a critical objective in working with men to resolve unhealthy sexualities.

According to McNair (2002), there has been colossal growth of the pornography industry in the United States (U.S.) over the past 30 years. The typical consumer is a young or middle-aged man, and endorsement of traditional masculinity has been linked with pornography consumption (Burns, 2001). Recent reports estimate that approximately 40 million adults in the United States regularly visit Internet pornography sites. In terms of economic impact, the annual earnings of the pornography industry in 1972 were estimated to be approximately 10 million dollars. The corresponding figure for 2007 was 100 billion dollars worldwide, with over $13 billion in revenue from the United States (Ropelato, 2007). Gay pornography constitutes one-third to one-half of this revenue (Thomas, 2000).

A good deal of research has focused on the potential dangers of heterosexual pornography. For example, research has demonstrated a clear association between viewing violent pornography and pro-rape attitudes. Malamuth and Check (1981) found a correlation between the frequency male students reported reading pornographic magazines and their self-reported likelihood of ever trying to force a woman to have sexual intercourse. The correlations were equally strong (if not stronger) in the case of nonviolent magazines such as *Playboy* and the more violent magazines such as *Hustler* (Scott & Schwalm, 1988). In laboratory studies, exposure to aggressive pornography increased aggression by men against women. Increases in aggressive behavior are most pronounced when the violent pornography portrays a positive outcome for the victim (Linz, Donnerstein, & Penrold, 1987; Russell, 1992, 1993) and when the men endorse traditional male gender roles. Adherence to stereotypical gender roles is related to a history of sexually aggressive behavior (Koss, Leonard, Beezley, & Oros, 1985).

Many researchers contend that pornography is even more accepted in gay culture than in heterosexual (Thomas, 2000). For example, 98% of gay men report having viewed pornography within the past 30 days (Duggan & McCreary, 2004). It may be that gay pornography is one of the only cultural representations of gay sexual desire available to gay men. In fact, some may argue that it is at the heart of gay male culture (Ellis & Whitehead, 2004). It may teach gay men an idealized and stylized approach to gay sex that passes as normative sexual conduct or a "mythology of sexual desire for the gay male community" (Ellis & Whitehead, 2004, p. 204). It may be that, because of the centrality of pornography to gay culture, many of those who research the role of gay pornography emphasize the positive contributions of the use of pornography to the gay community (Ellis & Whitehead, 2004). These claims include assertions that gay pornography destigmatizes gay sex by affirming and validating homosexual practices, challenging the dominant culture, helping to break down isolation of gays and lesbians, teaching gay men about safe sex, and helping to develop gay communities (Duggan & McCreary, 2004; Ellis & Whitehead, 2004; Kendall, 2004).

However, there are also significant detrimental effects of gay pornography for its consumers. These may include reinforcing power differentials that mirror heterosexual pornography and linking manliness with jeopardizing another man's safety or self-worth. Many sexual acts depicted in gay pornography promote violence and/or the sexual degradation of others along gender lines, with masculinity epitomized in men who ridicule and emasculate others for their sexual pleasure. Femininity is often linked with inferiority and inequality, violence is normalized for the consumer, and those that are inferior are described as gay, while those who abuse them are described as heterosexual

men who are momentarily having sex with a gay man because of either lack of an available and willing female or for pay (Kendall, 2004). Even in depictions of men alone, their humanity is removed. They are denied subjectivity and are emphasized as objects to be viewed and enjoyed, underlining a hierarchical sexuality that is infrequently mutual or empathic.

Pornography, for gay, heterosexual, and bisexual men, offers men the opportunity to benefit from dominance of traditional masculinity. As such, voyeurism is a medium that reinforces traditional masculinity and ensures that masculinity gives a man a sense of control. Through pornography men are told that sexual pleasure can be found while protecting their sense of masculine inadequacy (Kendall, 2004).

Going to a strip club is often another means of generating and regenerating the power that maintains men in a position of viewing bodies as sexually provocative. Research has indicated that, for gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men who go to strip clubs, not only does the male customer sexually desire the body he sees, but he often participates in the illusion that he himself is attractive and desirable to the dancer (DeMarco, 2007). Male customers maintain a normalized but abusive fantasy that allows them to view, sexually objectify, and sexually dominate the stripper. As in pornography, patrons of a strip club may be frustrated by their proximity to the object of desire, leading them to avoid intimate relationships.

In addition to viewing pornography, going to strip clubs, and viewing media representations of bodies, for heterosexual men voyeurism includes the act of "girl-watching," or sexually evaluating women, often in the company of other men (Quinn, 2002). It may take the form of a verbal or gestural message of "check it out," discussion

of sexual experiences, or explicit comments about a woman's body or imagined sexual acts. The subject may be an individual woman or group of women or simply a photograph or other representation. The more men adhere to traditional gender roles, the more likely they are to deny the harm in this normalized behavior, which is actually a form of sexual harassment (Gutket & Koss, 1993; Malovich & Stake, 1990; Murrell & Dietz-Uhler, 1993; Popovich, Gehlauf, Jolton, Somers, & Godinho, 1992; Pryor, 1987; Tagri & Hayes, 1997).

For heterosexual men, girl-watching functions simultaneously as a form of play and as a potentially powerful site of gendered social action (Quinn, 2002). As Cockburn (1983) noted, "Patriarchy is as much about relationships between man and man as it is about relations between men and women" (p.123). Girl-watching is a common way for heterosexual men to establish intimacy among themselves. It is a performance played to other men, whereby men assert a masculine identity to other men. Objectifying women produces a type of masculinity and demonstrates heterosexual desire (Butler, 1990), and the targeted woman is primarily an object onto which men's homosocial sexuality is projected.

For gay and bisexual men, there does not seem to be an equivalent in the literature regarding commenting on other men's bodies to create joint sexual fantasy, nor do we know whether or not bisexual men are likely to engage in these activities. Although, to my knowledge, there is no literature regarding community-building behaviors for bisexual men, there is research that describes gay men using forms of relational violence to create homosocial bonds (Kelley & Robertson, 2008). Gay men may use relational aggression in mate competition or for creating friendships while at bars/clubs, at parties,

and in other social groups associated with the acquisition of dating or sexual partners. These discussions can revolve around rumors concerning sexually transmitted infections, HIV status, sexual performance, and sexual behavior or promiscuity (Kelley & Robertson, 2008).

The homosocial nature of girl-watching (for heterosexual men) or interpersonal aggression (for gay men) is illustrative of the point made by Connell (1995) and others (Butler, 1990; Quinn, 2002; West & Zimmerman, 1987) that masculinity is not a securely acquired identity but rather one that must be constantly reclaimed. In a cross-cultural analysis, Gilmore (1990) found that "manhood" must be achieved and then maintained through continued performance influenced by hegemonic understanding of the concept of manhood. The attainment of manhood is not an automatic consequence of penis and testicles. Because hegemonic masculinity is a standard that few can achieve, it is therefore insecure and in need of constant reinforcement (Connell, 1995; Herek, 2000; Levant et al., 1992).

<div align="center">Objectification</div>

The concept of *Objectification* is rooted in the way men learn to perceive bodies. In this theme, objectification dehumanizes individuals by exchanging the whole person for only a part of him or her (Nussbaum, 1999). Objectification is the result of looking at bodies, as described by the *voyeurism* schema, and refers to seeing parts of bodies as sexual objects, devoid of personal characters. Bodies become a collection of eroticized body parts (Kimmel & Plante, 2002). As certain objectified bodies become idealized, real partners become less attractive because of their inevitable flaws. Another result is that

objectifying idealized bodies distracts men from emotional and physical intimacy with their own partners.

Objectification also causes difficulties in men's relationships because of effects on real life partners. This is because, first, o*bjectification* requires and perpetuates emotional distance and an idealized version of the body. Second, women and men are alienated by the way their partners use images for pleasure. For example, Bergner and Bridges (2002) found that the vast majority of women who discovered that their partners regularly viewed pornography felt confronted with alterations in their perception of their relationship with their partner. These women questioned their own worth, value, and sexual desirability and viewed their partner as an objectifier and sexual exploiter of women. For the partners of men who regularly view pornographic material, there may be a cluster of co-occurring, highly negative, and distressing meanings that men and women assign to their partner's pornography use (Bridges, Bergner, Hesson-McInnis, 2003).

Research suggests that sexual orientation may influence the objectification process among men (Silberstein, Mishkind, Strigel-Moore, Timko, & Rodin, 1989). Not only do ideas about the ideal body differ as a function of sexual orientation among men, but, also, the importance placed on attractiveness of potential sexual partners has been found to be greater among gay men than among heterosexual men (Sergious & Cody, 2001). Gay men appear to experience the male gaze in a manner similar to that of women, internalizing the view that they should be concerned with their appearance and attractiveness (Gettelman & Thompson, 1993) and objectifying themselves and other men more than heterosexual men do (Kozak, Roberts, Frankenhauser, 2009; Tiggemann

& Kirkbride, 2007). No research to date has addressed these issues in relation to bisexual men.

In addition to pornography websites, gay and bisexual men are much more likely to establish homosocial connections through participation in online social groups (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). As girl-watching socializes heterosexual men, online gay and bisexual men communities may socialize gay and bisexual male sexuality. Participation in virtual communities for gay and bisexual men allows for group process effects similar to those experienced by heterosexual men in traditional settings, such as bars or sporting events. The norms of the virtual community for gay and bisexual men exert an influence over the identity of its members, as group norms become part of individual self-concepts. The virtual groups have allowed gay and bisexual individuals to join a group of others and explore sexual orientation identity issues in a way that may normally remain hidden for fear of societal disapproval. Research has suggested that participation in these communities does not result in isolating or socially maladaptive activity, but facilitates relationships with others and personal identity development (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Brown, Maycock, & Burns, 2005).

There are a number of online communities for gay and bisexual men, however, that revolve around arranging sexual encounters with other members. A range of studies from the U.S. and the U.K. of gay and bisexual men have found that between 17% and 34% of men have used the Internet to find sexual partners (Benotsch, Kalichman, & Cage, 2002; Bull & McFarland, 2000; Elford, Bolding, & Sherr, 2001). These online venues frequently have streaming video that depicts sexual activity, and typically there are pictures of each member that can be viewed. Often these pictures are sexually

explicit. These sex sites provide many of the aspects of pornographic websites; however, in addition to images, these virtual communities provide opportunities for virtual interactions. As a gay or bisexual man interacts with others online and/or meets other gay and bisexual men for sex, he gains access to gay and bisexual culture and sexual schemas embedded within those cultures. These interactions lead to practicing and adopting the objectifying sexual scripts of the current gay and bisexual culture (Ellis, 2004), including emphasizing anonymity, viewing bodies as purely sexual objects, and evaluation of the sex appeal of the individuals they view. The majority of this research has grouped both gay and bisexual men together, generalizing behavior observed to both groups.

In addition to the damage to men's partners, heterosexual, bisexual, and gay men's ways of viewing other men's and women's bodies as purely sexual objects has three mirrored implications about the way they then view themselves. First, a masculine sexual self-concept is characterized by a dimension of aggressive sex, which concerns the extent to which men see themselves as being powerful, competitive, experienced, and dominant. Schwalbe (1992) argued that the requirements of masculinity necessitate a "narrowing of the moral self." Men (through masculinity socialization) learn that, to effectively perform masculinity and to protect a masculine identity, they must in many instances ignore a their sexual partner's feelings or sensitivities and obscure his or her viewpoint. These men fail to exhibit empathy with their sexual partners because masculinity precludes them from taking the position of the other. Men's moral stance toward their sexual partners is characterized by this lack of empathy.

Second, there is an increased tendency for gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men to objectify their own bodies (Johnson, McCreary, & Mills, 2007). Intensified media

attention on men's bodies (Leit, Pope, & Gray, 2001) and research in the area of men's perceptions of their bodies have shown that men are becoming preoccupied with the size of their bodies, leaving many men convinced that they are small and underdeveloped, regardless of the actual state of their bodies (Luciano, 2001; Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000). In fact, between 28% and 68% of normal weight adolescent boys and young men feel that they are underweight and want to gain weight and muscle (McCreary & Sasse, 2000). Additionally, it is estimated that approximately three million men in North America use anabolic-androgenic steroids or other harmful drugs to augment muscularity, and another million or more men have developed body dysmorphic disorder (Pope et al., 2000).

Gay and bisexual men have been shown to have the same kinds of body dissatisfaction as heterosexual men across a variety of domains (Martins, Tiggemann, & Churchett, 2008). However, gay and bisexual men may be even more susceptible to a greater degree of dissatisfaction with their own bodies. In fact, in several studies over the last decade examining body dissatisfaction among gay men, lesbians, heterosexual men, and heterosexual women, gay men report the highest levels of body dissatisfaction of all four groups (Morrison, Morrison, & Sager, 2004). Heterosexual men appear to be able to engage in self-objectification or monitoring of their own bodies without any consequent sense of shame (Martins, Tiggemann, & Kirkbride, 2007), whereas gay men experience a greater amount of body dissatisfaction when evaluating their own bodies (Strong, Singh, & Randall, 2000; Tiggemann, Martins, & Kirkbride, 2007). Although several studies regarding body image issues of sexual minority men include bisexual men, research specifically addressing the body image of bisexual men does not exist.

For gay men, there is also a relationship between self-objectification and objectifying others. Because of the intense objectification in the gay sexual self-schema, gay men may be even more susceptible to a greater degree of objectification of the male body. It may be that the more one identifies oneself in terms of external, appearance-based characteristics, the more one will construe potential mates in a similar objectified way (Kozak, Frankenhauser, & Roberts, 2009). No such relationship has been found for heterosexual men. This may be because gay men are objectified not only by themselves but also by other gay men (Kozak et al., 2009). No studies have addressed how objectification affects bisexual men. It is unclear whether bisexual men might be vulnerable to the same level of objectification and self-objectification as gay men or if their attractions to women might moderate this effect in some way.

An example of this difference in objectification behavior between gay and heterosexual men is the focus on muscularity. Both gay and heterosexual men desire to be leaner and more muscular, but this desire is amplified in gay and bisexual men, as evidenced by their greater discrepancies between their current and ideal levels of body weight and muscularity (Martin et al., 2008). Researchers have attributed this difference to a wide range of possible catalysts. The attainment of muscularity may also be a strategy used by gay and bisexual men to meet dominant masculinity ideologies and overcompensate for their stigmatized sexual orientation (Kimmel & Mahalik, 2005). Internalized heterosexism is linked to eating disorder symptoms through feelings of shame (Beren, 1997). An intense focus on muscularity may be an effect of the centrality of pornography to gay culture (Duggan & McCreary, 2004). Or it may be that a focus on muscularity is the result of childhood harassment for gender nonconformity, which then

promotes efforts to monitor and control one's bodily appearance (Wiseman & Moradi, 2010). In this case, body monitoring may be a self-protective function of preventing further harassment and potential violence.

Although there has been little research on how gay men learn objectification as a result of viewing pornography (Morrison, Morrison, & Bradley, 2007), images of gay manhood are highly exclusionary and focused on youth, muscularity, Whiteness, and physical attractiveness (Kendall, 1997; Morrison, 2004). Whereas most gay men do not believe that pornography affects their beliefs or expectations (Morrison, 2004), many studies have shown there are adverse effects to frequent pornography use. Some researchers cite idealistic bodies displayed in pornography as contributing to an obsession with fitness that jeopardize gay men's sense of physical and sexual well-being (Morrison et al., 2007). Other research has shown that, the more gay men viewed pornography, the more anxious they were to show their bodies in public and the greater was their drive for muscularity (Duggan & McCreary, 2004; Morrison, Morrison, & Bradley, 2007). Sexual interactions between performers in gay pornography simulate and reinforce a heterosexual model in which one or more partners assume a subordinate role and focus on the eschewal of anything feminine (Morrison, 2004). The invisibility of the influence of pornography on gay men's perceptions of their sexuality and construction of a sexual repertoire may allow for problematic behavior to continue unexamined.

What is especially fascinating about self-objectification differences between gay and heterosexual men is that it is a clear example of several masculinities at play based on larger cultural, social, and economic trends, rather than one, unified code of behavior and attitudes for all men. Historically, for heterosexual men, "real" men do not and

should not care about their appearance (Frith & Cleeson, 2004), whereas, for gay men, it is much more acceptable to report that one is preoccupied with external presentation. This is presumably because of an emphasis in gay male subculture on appearance and objectification, which has elicited a very different body experience as related to masculinity (Morgan & Arcelus, 2009). However, rapidly changing cultural pressures in recent years have raised pressures for heterosexual men to have larger muscles and a trimmer physique (Luciano, 2007). Younger heterosexual men confront similar impossible body image ideals that already challenge gay men (Cash, Winstead, & Janda, 1986). Current studies find low levels of body satisfaction among all young men or any sexual orientation, and that the media, magazines, and clubs are all important influences upon all men's focus on appearance (Morgan & Arcelus, 2009).

Bisexual men's body image is distinct from gay and heterosexual men in significant ways. Although there is no specific research addressing bisexual men and objectification, multiple studies have reported that bisexual men's sex drives showed much the same pattern of sex drive correlations as heterosexual men did (i.e., bisexual men's sex drive correlated very weakly with same-sex attractions and more strongly with other-sex attractions) (Lippa, 2006; Lippa, 2007). It is possible that, for bisexual men, this sex drive and attraction correlates with heterosexual men's diminished preoccupation with appearance; however, this is not yet understood.

What appears most likely from the limited amount of research available is a certain flexibility within bisexual relationships (Pennington, 2009). Whereas some bisexual men are generally consistent in their performances of femininity or masculinity in all their romantic relationships, others' gender performance is characterized by greater

fluidity. Depending on their partners, bisexual men sometimes may enact more conventional gender roles in some relationships, whereas at other times or in other relationships they may perform the "opposite" role.

The third implication about the way men come to view themselves as a result of objectifying others' bodies includes men learning to view themselves as biologically helpless to the effects of testosterone. For example, men who frequent prostitutes often justify their need for sex by citing a strong biological desire instilled by nature and testosterone (Smette, 2003). It is this "biological pressure" that forces men to purchase sex. This idea creates its own reality (Lorentzen, 2007), justifying existing realities by creating natural explanations. But it is not biology that creates these ideas, it is culture (Kimmel, 2000). Although men may be influenced by popular media representations of prostitutes, only one-third of men who used a prostitute reported they enjoyed sex with her (Sawyer, Metz, Hinds, & Brucker, 2001).

As reports of sexual misconduct among "normal" men have increased, the distinction between sexual deviancy and what is normal male sexual behavior has become less clear (Templeman & Stinnett, 1991). In a study by Templeman and Stinnett (1991), 65% of the heterosexual men in their sample had engaged in some form of sexual misconduct (e.g., sexual contact with children, coercive sex with women, voyeurism, frottage, or obscene phone calls). Interestingly, these arousal patterns did not appear related to a history of sexual abuse as children or to the presence of an unusually large number of sex offenders in the sample. Sexual misconduct may be less a function of psychopathology than masculine socialization (Brooks & Silverstein, 1995; Finkelhor, 1984).

The Need for Validation

The Need for Validation as described in The Centerfold Syndrome refers to men's perception that women have power to validate men as sexual performers (for example, "that was fantastic," "you are a stud," "you satisfy me like no other"). This illustrates the way heteromasculinity is defined by its relationship to women. Masculinity is not independent, and heterosexual men need sexual relationships with women to define themselves to women and other men (Rogers, 2005). As a result, women have the power to validate, and to invalidate, a man's own sense of masculinity (Pleck, 1977).

Gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men are encouraged to be promiscuous, and sexual performance is the barometer of masculinity. Men are socialized to seek as much sex as possible because of the social desirability of appearing masculine (De Gaston, Weed, & Jensen, 1996; Zuckerman & Myers, 1983). Often men view their sexual conquests as proof of their own superiority over other, nonconquering men (Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). Sexuality, for heterosexual men, becomes something that is done to women or begged of women rather than a shared sensuality shared openly with women (Halloran, 1995). Gay and bisexual men appear to stress sexual promiscuity and deemphasize emotional intimacy as well (Renaud and Byers, 1999). Thus, for gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men there is an emphasis on sexuality in terms of performance and covert goals and not in terms of communication and emotional intimacy.

If a man is unable or chooses not to have sex, he may often have a sense that he is less masculine than other men. In Komarovsky's (1976) study of college-aged heterosexual men, young men who remained virgins often experienced shame and low self-esteem because of their lack of "success" with women. As these men are socialized

into male sexuality, they frequently indicate that they feel pressure to be more sexually experienced than their female partners, which leads to lying and deceit.

Vested with immense power to validate or discredit masculinity (Pleck, 1977), heterosexual men fear that women will humiliate, demean, or criticize them, often leading to misogyny and a systematic fear and distrust of a sexual partner. A common belief among gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men is that unsatisfied sexual partners will seek other men (Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003; Cunningham & Russell, 2004), and men develop fear of losing the partner who validates them. Because of this insecurity, men also experience jealousy and suspiciousness toward other men, whom they see as rivals for that validation.

Because of the power that heterosexual men vest into sexual relations with women, it is understandable that they have an ambivalent view of women (Horrocks, 1994). Sex with women is a source of uncertainty, fear, and threat. In this confusion, masculinity endorses the myth that it is women who need love and secure attachment, but that men just need sex and validation. This protects men from their own need for intimacy and connection and the power men fear women would have over them should this need be openly admitted (Hollway, 1984).

The pursuit of sex for validation of masculinity also constitutes a critical barrier to monogamy and men's long-term romantic relationships. For gay, bisexual, and heterosexual couples, relationships are frequently characterized by the anxiety that a man will not be sexually faithful to his partner (Levant & Brooks, 1997). For many men, the idea of sexual exclusivity goes against the irrepressible and inevitable reality that they will need extra-relational sex to continue to be validated (Worth, Reid, & McMillan,

2002). This goes against a model that true love is signified by sexual exclusivity and infidelity is perceived as a betrayal of that bond. However, for most men, the fear of losing their relationship makes them reluctant to talk with their partners about sex outside their relationship. This lack of communication about nonmonogamy may lead to loss of trust, conflict, and, ultimately, the loss of the relationship altogether.

The Need for Validation element of the Centerfold Syndrome, centering on gaining a reputation as a man who is able to sexually satisfy women, produces a double bind for gay and bisexual men because denouncing heterosexuality severs gay and bisexual men from a key element of hegemonic masculinity. Because sexual functioning with women serves as a major component of masculinity, a lack of sex with women will inevitably damage a gay or bisexual man's male gender identity. Although gay and bisexual men may pattern their gender performance after heterosexual men, this is clearly an area where this performance most deviates.

Consequently, gay and bisexual men may enact a variety of strategies that emphasize their continued identification with masculine social behavior. For example, gay and bisexual men may emphasize their continued identification with masculine social behavior through power roles enacted in sexual intercourse. Gay and bisexual men may conceptualize sex roles as binary: as occurring between an active, dominant, top position and a passive, submissive, bottom position. Receptivity in anal intercourse is frequently associated with femininity, suggesting one is more or less gay according to whether or not one is engaged in "feminine" sexual practices (Kippax & Smith, 2001). Gay and bisexual men may experience deep anxiety around the significance of submission and incompatibility between being masculine and receptive. An unwillingness to engage in

receptive intercourse may be a strategy to maintain a public sense of masculine integrity and avoid feminine submission as a problematic practice for a man to adopt. If a gay or bisexual man feels a sense that to penetrate emphasizes masculinity, being active in anal intercourse may reinforce this sense of identity (Waldby, 1995). He may keep a desire to be passive from his partner or himself, unable to admit to the pleasure of passivity, or resist the exploration of that position. Or, a gay or bisexual man may conceptualize a power dynamic where power is shared equally while both men evenly distribute opportunities to be insertive. It has been suggested that a man can allow himself to be the receptive partner only once he modifies his masculine view of the self (Cornell, 1993).

Indeed, the Need for Validation concept of The Centerfold Syndrome seems to ask most gay and bisexual men to modify their conceptualization of masculinity. A reappropriation of masculinity for gay and bisexual men is illustrated in the fact that men who enjoy being receptive in anal intercourse reject an oversimplification of power in sex (Kippax & Smith, 2001). Many gay and bisexual men do not feel that being the receptive partner is being dominated. What establishes a man's experience, in the case of being receptive in sexual intercourse, is a context-specific opportunity that does not necessarily empower or disempower a partner. Each position offers a fluidity of power and opportunities to exercise control or surrender it (Kippax & Smith, 2001).

Trophyism

Trophyism is a theme that is embedded in the need for validation from other men. This schema refers to the validation heterosexual men receive from the male chorus when they are able to "win" the affections of a beautiful woman. It follows that the more

physically attractive the partner, the more a man perceives his manhood is validated. Men who are unable to have sex with the most attractive partners are left feeling unmanly or cheated. Numerous studies confirm the common belief that men give higher priority to the physical attributes of their romantic and sexual partners than do women (Siever, 1996). It follows that beautiful men and women are prizes to be won and displayed by the most worthy men. "Scoring," or having sex with an attractive partner, is the ultimate overt indication that a man has proven his masculinity. In this way, the presence of an attractive body is treated as visual indication of the masculinity of the partner (including their financial success, sexual performance, athletic prowess, and courage). But beauty is tenuous as property, leading to fear that the partner will leave, as well as fear that the partner's body will change over time.

Trophyism leads men to either constantly search for a new, more perfect sexual partner or to pressure their current partner to maintain a flawless appearance. Heterosexual men, for example, may coerce their partners to undergo augmentation by plastic surgery in order to maintain their women as "trophies." Gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men may go to great, risky, costly, and even dangerous lengths to find opportunities to become sexually involved with desirable partners (Goodman, 1998; Zuckerman & Meyers, 1983). However, sexual anxiety is often strengthened following these casual encounters because they tend to be based on the intensely arousing but temporary feelings of power and domination (Barry, 1995). These behaviors may include dependence on Internet sex, pornography, phone sex, prostitutes, peep shows, compulsive masturbation, sexual promiscuity, serial affairs, or compulsive sexuality within a relationship (Cooper, 1998; Cooper, Putnam, Planchon, & Boies, 1999).

Although there has been no research on the same sense of "scoring" for gay or bisexual men, gay masculinities encourage gay men to seek out sex with the most attractive men as a way to bolster difficult self-esteem issues inherent in being a sexual minority. Research suggests that this variable of Trophyism may be even stronger in gay men than for heterosexual men. Gay men generally ascribe greater importance to attractiveness than other groups, with physical appearances being more central to their personal and cultural identities (Deaux & Hanna, 1984). In gay masculinity, the attractiveness of a man's sexual partner is seen as a man's sexual capital. Again, the paucity of research on bisexual men leaves questions about whether they might be affected by Trophyism in ways that are more similar to heterosexual or gay men.

Power is equated with the capacity to attract the most attractive sexual partner (Bersani, 1988). However, the contradictory nature of Trophyism as enacted in gay culture is that a man's sexual capital (and sexual attractiveness) is typically based on his ability to appear heteromasculine, which is a masculinity that rejects sex with other men. To appear sexy to potential mates means to be appear as though one is not attracted to other men. These Trophyism strategies are examples of men using a sexual partner in order to gain approval from and build rapport with peers.

The Fear of True Intimacy and Engulfment

The above themes lead to the difficulty men experience forming true connections with not only women, but also with other men. *The Fear of True Intimacy and Engulfment* aspect of the Centerfold Syndrome is perhaps the most complex and destructive schema of the construct. It is an outgrowth of men's basic problems with

attachment and striving for independence, power, and competition (Blazina, Eddins, Burridge, & Settle, 2007). Men may be afraid of being too close or becoming too vulnerable. Gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men alike may keep others at a distance in order to depress intimacy needs (Blazina & Watkins, 2000; Brannon, 1976; Pollack, 1995; Ridge, Plummer, & Peasley, 2006). This may be compounded by the fact that some men are not only impaired by the socialization process, leaving them with painful affective states (Blazina, 2004), but they also lack the needed psycho-emotional experiences that give them the resources to deal with the effects of traditional masculine roles (Blazina, 2001; Ridge et al., 2006). This may result in a coping strategy of denying their needs and isolating themselves from others. In avoiding intimacy in relationships, men distance themselves from others while trying to deal with negative emotions in isolation. Other possible strategies for coping with negative results of male role socialization include an overly dependent style of relating to others, looking outside of themselves in an overly dependent manner (such as extreme emotional dependence on their romantic partner, drinking, or compulsive sexual behavior), or moving against others (Mahalik, Cournoyer, DeFranc, Cherry, & Napolitano, 1998).

Emotional Inexpressiveness

Dysfunction strain conceptualizes the idea that fulfilling the requirements of the traditional male role may lead to negative outcomes for men in terms of their intimacy with others (Burn & Ward, 2005). Emotional expressiveness and self-disclosure are also identified as feminine qualities and are thus to be avoided (Burn, 1996; O'Neil, 1981).

For example, men are socialized to compete and to place winning above intimacy, whereas women are socialized to create harmony and intimacy in the romantic relationship (Jones & Dembo, 1989; Ruble & Scheer, 1994). Traditional male role norms encourage commitment to work at the expense of marriage and family (Pleck, 1995). Men are also expected to be "tough" and are socialized to withhold their emotional feelings, and conformity to masculine norms is associated with lower capacity for intimacy (Ludlow & Mahalik, 2001). Results of studies on self-disclosure also suggests that individuals who avoid self-disclosure, especially about important aspects of themselves, are at risk for becoming alienated and often lack genuine relationships in which to grow (Alden & Bieling, 1998; Jourard, 1959; Papsdorf & Alden, 1998).

Separation of Sex and Emotional Intimacy

Because of the emphasis placed on competitive and aggressive skills and denial of attachment needs and intimacy, the safest sex for men is emotionally disconnected. It is believed that men, in contrast to women, are more likely to learn to cognitively separate sex from love (Banfield & McCabe, 2001; Duncombe & Marsden, 1999; Lawson, 1988). For example, Glass and Wright (1985) found that more than half of the heterosexual men who had extramarital sex stated that their marriages were happy or very happy and their extramarital relationships were solely sexual in nature. These men cited the need for sexual excitement, rather than emotional fulfillment, as justification for extramarital intercourse (Glass & Wright, 1992).

Both gay and heterosexual men (and, presumably, bisexual men) are nearly identical in their degree of interest in casual sex (Baily, Gaulin, Agyei, & Gladue, 1994),

which may indicate that men are more interested in the physical aspect of sex rather than risk the vulnerability of emotional intimacy (Schmitt, 2005; Townsend, 1995). Whatever the motivation may be, interest in casual sex is associated with masculine gender roles (Cunningham & Russell, 2004), greater frequency of being without a romantic partner (Baron, 1996), and also with less commitment and love for a current partner (Klusmann, 2001; Sanchez, Bocklandt, & Vilain, 2009). It may be that the potential for emotional expression and true emotional intimacy can be such a daunting threat of engulfment that men learn to separate their sexual experiences from their emotions. As a result, men may learn to sexualize all feelings of emotional and physical closeness and may seek sex when they want emotional intimacy or physical comforting.

Because the nearest many men get to emotional intimacy is sex, sex and emotional intimacy become fused or, rather, sex takes the place of emotional intimacy. This may also be why men place a higher emphasis in a relationship on sexual activities than do women (Palton & Waring, 1985; Rubin, 1983). Fear of this intimacy may be why men have more sexual partners than women, and why heterosexual men may have less intimate relationships with women and are more likely to view relationships between men and women as adversarial (Pleck, Sonenstein, and Ku, 1993).

The Role of Emotional Expressiveness in Relationship Satisfaction

It is commonly understood that, within heterosexual relationships, women are more focused on the emotional connection in the relationship than are men (Hatfield, Sprecher, Pillemer, & Greeberger, 1988). However, further investigation suggests that what may be detected in these studies is that women may feel less vulnerable in admitting

the value they place on this intimacy. It is this emphasis on seeking intimacy as a part of femininity that may have been detected in research rather than an actual difference in the experience of intimacy between men and women. It may be that, although men and women may be equally focused on the emotional connection, men have learned to hide their interest and vulnerability in emotional intimacy. It is for this reason that, in heterosexual relationships, men are less emotionally expressive and self-disclose significantly less than their female counterparts (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Foubert & Sholley, 1996; Stapley & Haviland, 1989).

Within gay relationships, emotional connection also predicts relationship satisfaction. In terms of how happy both partners report being, and how long they stay together, gay relationships operate on essentially the same principles as heterosexual relationships (Gottman, Levenson, Gross, Frederickson, McCoy, Rosenthal, Ruef, & Yoshimoto, 2003; Kurdek, 1998). Gay men show a similar shying away from emotional expression in their relationships as heterosexual men do in theirs. Although there has been no similar research including bisexual men in relationships, presumably, bisexual men would also demonstrate this emotional distance. This reluctance may be the result not only of an association with normative masculinity, but also may be the effect of a rejection by gay (and possibly bisexual) men of a traditional association made between homosexuality and effeminacy. The role of emotional caretaking is traditionally perceived to be the role of women; and gay men may reject intimacy, or at least certain kinds of intimacy (Edwards, 1994). As a result, gay men, like heterosexual men, may have difficulty discussing the emotional needs of themselves and their partners within intimate relationships.

Although we may suppose bisexual men also have a similar difficulty as gay and heterosexual men in terms of emotional expressiveness, there is no evidence as yet to substantiate such a claim. It is notable that none of the studies cited here included bisexual men or their relationships. Some research has indicated that bisexuals' relationships are often configured so that one person is more dominant and enacts the emotional inexpressiveness associated with masculinity (Pennington, 2009). This person is perceived as the more "masculine" partner, and the more expressive partner is seen as more "feminine." However, as a sexual orientation identity for which no particular gender performances have been ascribed, unlike those for gay/lesbian and heterosexual women and men, bisexual men (and women) may labor to define a gender performance related to expressiveness.

Whereas men have difficulty expressing themselves in relationships, studies have demonstrated that for both members of a gay relationship and for both sexes in a heterosexual relationship, consideration of the interpersonal aspects of the relationship was equally high (Gottman et al., 2003; McCabe, 1999). For women and for both gay and heterosexual men, willingness to self-disclose personal information, thoughts, and feelings increases relationship satisfaction (Boyd, 1995; Jones, 1991; Siavelis & Lamke, 1992) and predicts that a relationship will continue into the future (Gottman et al., 2003). The longer men are in long-term relationships, the more satisfied they are likely to be regardless of their interest in sex without emotional intimacy (Burn & Ward, 2005; Sanchez et al., 2009). Furthermore, a number of studies have found that gender role conflict is associated with reduced relationship intimacy and reduced relationship

satisfaction (Campbell & Snow, 1992; Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004: Sharpe & Heppner, 1991; Sharpe et al., 1995).

Because at some level men may value emotional closeness as much as women, being less expressive emotionally may be a male gender role communication strategy rather than disability. Brooks (1995) suggested that, in response to anxiety surrounding intimacy, men's reluctance to be intimate often becomes a semi-intentional strategy to monitor interpersonal distance. Men's reluctance to be intimate is not always the result of fear or skill deficit. Social withdrawal and silence make men appear to be socially dominant and in control. Men may limit their emotional expression to consolidate power and to guard against showing the real limits of their potential and power (Sattel, 1976).

Brooks (1995) suggested that the fear of true intimacy leads to additional relationship difficulties. Heterosexual men, and possibly bisexual men in relationships with women, may become overdependent on the power of emotional expressiveness that women bring to relationships. Furthermore, they may become overdependent on their sexual partners, or they may become promiscuous in order to not get too close to any one partner. Desiring this validation, from themselves and also from other men, a man's feelings toward women can become complexly intertwined with love, excitement, hate, fear, physical pleasure, and jealousy.

Fear of true intimacy also deprives men of sensuality. Men who want to have sex without emotional intimacy focus on stimulation of the penis and ejaculation over other sensual foreplay that may emphasize emotional closeness and physical pleasure. The emotionally-charged psychological space that can be stimulated in every part of the body is eliminated. Jorgen Lorentzen (2007) wrote, "Men are developing a parchment-like

sensibility, impervious to touch, as opposed to a porous sensibility in which the skin allows for openings and intimacy" (p. 73). There is, therefore, an extreme focus on genital pleasure and ejaculation as the source of sensuality, along with relatively little thought given to stimulation of the body as a whole and the enjoyment of "foreplay," which may be considered a waste of time. Overall, chronic lack of emotional intimacy may drive many men to addictive, compulsive, and automatic sexual pursuits that contribute to male sexual anxiety (Philaretou & Allen, 2003). Casual sexual encounters tend to decrease an emphasis on sensuality and place considerable attention on the technicalities of sex. Although sensuality is not destroyed by age and does not require a perfect body, casual sex accentuates idealized images of women. The overt acts of sex are central to temporary sexual satisfaction but are ineffective in fostering intimacy, happiness, and personal fulfillment (Levine & Troiden, 1988).

The effects of this are that, to satisfy the requirements of masculine role mandates, men feel they must perform according to the current perceptions of male sexuality (which may include the use of penile enlargements, erectile dysfunction medications, pornography, etc.), which emphasize that men's physical bodies are separate from intimacy and require limited emotional investment. Not only do men become separate from their sexual partners, but they also become separate from their own sensations, emotions, and sensitivity, fragmenting and compartmentalizing a full sexual life (Lorentzen, 2007).

Heterosexism

For heterosexual men, perhaps one of the clearest examples of the sexualizing of intimacy is the pressure a man feels to reassure himself, and others, that he is not gay (Gorer, 1964). Intimacy with other men incites homophobic panic because of its association with sex, and friendships with women are sexualized. Because no amount of "evidence" is enough, every man is potentially suspect (Connell, 1995; Eliason, 1995; Herek, 1986, 2000; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Kimmel, 1996; Simoni & Walters, 2001). According to Herek (1993), to be a man or to be masculine is defined as being homophobic. Thus, the experience, or even the idea, of intimacy with other men incites homonegative panic. Fearful attitudes toward emotional closeness with men appear to result from insecurities about personal adequacy in meeting gender role demands. This leads to hyperconformity to perceived standards of masculinity (Herek, 1993). Homonegativity may serve as a way of preventing anxiety that results from intrapsychic conflicts concerning a man's own heterosexual masculinity. For heterosexual men, gay men may symbolize parts of the self that do not measure up to cultural standards, and directing hostility at them externalizes anxiety and also affirms traditional masculinity. Although homonegativity seems helpful to men in gaining admiration and confidence, fear of intimacy with other men further isolates men. Men feel a need for intimate friendships with other men, yet feel uncomfortable when other men initiate emotional and/or physical contact and remain hypervigilant when behavior might be considered stereotypically performed only by gay men (Mahalik, 2001). This avoidance and isolation is self-perpetuating, making impossible connections that would provide much needed true emotional connection.

For gay men, internalized heterosexism dramatically shapes the construction of gay masculinity. There is often a strict conformity to specific normative codes about the enactment of masculinity (Levine, 1998) or adoption of traditional imagines of masculinity in an over-the top, over-conforming way that often appears self-conscious (Edwards, 1994). For example, within gay culture, the term "straight-acting" is often used to describe gay men who reproduce a version of masculinity that is more authentically heteromasculine (Clarkson, 2006). Furthermore, being heteromasculine is important to gay men. For instance, gay men rated masculine gay men as significantly more likeable than feminine gay men (Skidmore, Linsenmeier, & Bailey, 2006), and on average gay men wished to be more masculine than they perceived themselves to be (Sanchez et al., 2010). Valuing heteromasculine gender performance is also a heterosexist tactic that serves to isolate those who do not conform to traditional masculinity.

In this case, being "straight-acting," or a heterosexist gender performance for gay men, valorizes heteronormative masculinity privilege (Clarkson, 2006). It is a rejection of the feminine traits so often attributed to gay men, often at the expense of the feminine and those who represent it. The masculine homosexual may oppress the feminine in ways similar to hegemonic masculinity's subordination of homosexuals and men of color (Ward, 2000). It reinforces the idea that homosexuality can be visually, behaviorally, and psychologically distinguished from other sexualities and be signified by clothing, gait, posture, facial expression, hand gestures, etc.; it also perpetuates the notion that male feminine gender performance is associated with homosexuality (Clarkson, 2006). This research demonstrates the importance of studying gender as distinct from sexual orientation.

It is not yet clear how bisexual men's sexual practices are affected by heterosexism. Bisexual men may feel that if they act within a certain range of accepted "masculine" sexual behaviors (for example, an emphasis placed on physical pleasure during sex to the exclusion of emotional intimacy) they will avoid femininity, or a gay sexual orientation identity. Or some bisexual men may feel that by being the insertive partner in sexual intercourse, they can engage in male-to-male sexual behavior without raising concerns about their manhood (Stokes et al., 1998). In this case, sex with another man may not cause them gender role discord as long as it does not feel vulnerable or intimate.

However, one area of controversial discussion is why men may choose a bisexual orientation identity over a homosexual or heterosexual orientation identity for nonsexual reasons. For example, Rieger, Chivers, and Bailey (2005) found that men in their study who reported bisexual feelings did not show any evidence of a distinctively bisexual pattern of genital arousal. On average, bisexual men had much higher arousal to one sex than to the other. This may be due to a variety of reasons that may have to do with masculine role norms, including heterosexism. For example, men who identify as bisexual may include men in transition who will eventually self-identify as gay (Stokes, Miller, & Mundhenk, 1998). It is estimated that approximately 40% of gay men had at some point in their coming out process self-identified as bisexual (Lever, 1994). Given the stigma associated with being a gay man, adopting a bisexual orientation identity and/or engaging in sex with women as well as men may reduce the anxiety and sense of isolation many men feel as they become aware of their attraction to men (Carballo-

Dieguez, 1004; McKirnan, Doll, & Burzette, 1996; Peterson, 1992; Stokes & Peterson, 1998; Stokes, Vanable, & McKirnan, 1997).

Internalized heterosexism also relates to self-esteem and psychological distress for gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men (Szymanski & Carr, 2008). This suggests that avoidance of feminine characteristics, which are often erroneously equated with male homosexuality (O'Neil, 1981), is important not only to heterosexual men's lives but also to sexual minority men's lives (Sanchez et al., 2010). Sexual minority men, as well as their heterosexual counterparts, receive strong messages that it is not okay to be gay or bisexual and that being gay or bisexual means you are "not a real man" (Szymanski & Carr, 2008). This internalized oppression can lead to rejection sensitivity, including difficulties expressing emotions, being affectionate with other men, issues with trust in relationships, asserting their needs in interpersonal relationships, and generally higher levels of psychological distress among gay and bisexual men, especially in young adulthood (Bybee et al., 2009; Ervin, 2005; Pachankis, Goldfried, & Ramrattan, 2008; Sanchez, 2005; Shidlo, 1994). Thus, gay and bisexual men who are more concerned about violating traditional masculine ideals feel more negatively about being gay or bisexual than those less concerned (Sanchez et al., 2010; Pennington, 2009).

Problematic elements of hegemonic masculinity may play out in unique ways in gay and bisexual men's sexual expression, specifically a high frequency of nonrelational sex (Diaz, 1998; Levine, 1998; Wilson et al., 2010; Wolfe, 2003). There are myriad opportunities for casual and anonymous male-to-male sex in public bathrooms, parks, bathhouses, bars (Blumstein & Schwarz, 1983; Driggs & Finn, 1983), and the Internet (Ellis, 2004). There are many possible explanations for why casual sex is so popular in

gay culture. One possible explanation for the findings that gay and bisexual men have a higher prevalence of multiple sex partners is that external and internal heterosexism may cause mental health difficulties that are dealt with through unhealthy coping strategies, such as a high rate of casual sex (Diaz, Ayala, & Being, 2004; Dudlley, Tostosky, Korfhage, & Zimmerman, 2004; Ridge et al., 2006). In addition, gay and bisexual men typically are unable to develop same-sex relationship skills while they are growing up, skills that may benefit their later relationships with other men, and many just begin to learn relationship skills later in life. As gay men (and likely bisexual men who relate to men) use trial and error in learning relational skills in a subculture of masculinity that is immediately sexual, they are going through the developmental steps of a "second adolescence," discovering their sexuality for the very first time (Michael, 1997). A third possible explanation may be that masculinity socialization teaches an ability to separate sex and love, which, combined with the stigmatization of male-male sexual activity, has resulted in the social acceptance of casual sex among large segments of the gay male and bisexual population (Rhodes & Yee, 2006). Men who relate to men are taught to initiate sex early in the relationship and to later nurture a relationship; and, when relational dynamics do not work out easily with one sexual partner, they may move quickly on to another (Michael, 1997). Fourth, gay and bisexual men may use sex to reinforce a masculine identity (Wilson et al., 2010). Gay, and possibly bisexual, men may feel as though they cannot meet gender role expectations because of their sexual orientation and thus may pursue other means of asserting and compensating their manhood, such as having multiple partners (Rhodes & Yee, 2006) and/or engaging in other sexual risk behaviors, such as unprotected sex (Dowsett, Williams, Venuneac, & Carballo-Dieguez,

2008). Fifth, for many young gay and bisexual men sex may not only be desired in its own right, but may become a means of accessing communities of gay and bisexual men (Braun, Terry, Gavey, & Fenaughty, 2009). In these situations, young and inexperienced men can be particularly vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation by older, more experienced men (Braun et al., 2009). Finally, a sixth potential contributing factor to sexual compulsivity for gay and bisexual men may be that gay and bisexual men learn to be secretive about sexual activity. Because many men who have sex with men learn to be ashamed of and to hide their sexual feelings and behavior, they may learn to keep their sexual lives secret, including engaging in covert, outside sex while in monogamous relationships, or being able to articulate their sexual needs to their partners (LaSala, 2004). Certainly, there are many factors involved in behavior, and further exploration of how masculine gender roles affect gay and bisexual men's sexuality is warranted.

A gay or bisexual man's ability to accept his own sexual orientation identity also has a significant impact on his romantic relationships. Self-acceptance of one's sexual minority identity predicts both relationship quality and attachment security (Elizsur & Mintzer, 2003). Gay and bisexual men struggle to develop a positive self-concept in a discriminating environment that portrays being gay or bisexual as being in opposition to masculinity. This process of developing a positive sexual orientation identity is probably interwoven with the ability to believe that one will be wanted by a caring and trustworthy other, which is generally associated with a positive view of the self (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Resolution of one's internalized heterosexism is expected to lead to a belief that one can be valued and loved by another.

The greater social climate of heterosexism also affects gay and bisexual men's romantic relationships. In the popular heterosexual imagination, and often within gay culture itself (Crossley, 2004), gay sexuality is represented as the "innate" male sex drive gone wild and unfettered by female "gatekeepers" (Hollway, 1989). This image of gay men and hypersexuality is predominantly based on heteromasculinity; however, gay men are stereotyped as having extremely high sex drives (Wakelin & Long, 2003). Similarly, stereotypes of bisexuals as sexually promiscuous contribute to the belief that bisexual male sexuality is also sexuality run rampant. These stereotypes may include a belief that bisexual men are indiscriminant when it comes to sex and presumably experience a female or male partner in the same way (Pennington, 2009). Same-sex relationships are not sanctioned in the same way as opposite-sex relationships, and gay and bisexual men cannot escape the impact of this social invalidation. This can put a particular stress and intensity on a relationship due to the isolation, not only by the heterosexual community, but by gay and bisexual communities as well (Edwards, 1994). Many gay men do not feel supported by the wider gay community in their attempt to maintain a monogamous long-term relationship (Worth et al., 2002). Bisexual men are likewise invalidated because of the perception that in choosing one partner there is a part of their sexuality that will always remain unfulfilled (Pennington, 2009). This may lead gay and bisexual men to suspect that monogamy is an ideal that is ultimately impossible to sustain. Stable relationships with monogamous intentions coexist alongside the conviction that extrarelational sex is inevitable.

Sexual Assault

For gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men, this need to feel close and intimate combined with fear and vulnerability creates a rather complicated feeling toward one's romantic and/or sexual partner. Renaud and Byers (1999) found that, compared to women, men reported experiencing more frequent positive sexual cognitions reflecting themes of anonymous/impersonal sex (e.g., participating in an orgy, having sex with an anonymous stranger). Byers, Purdon, and Clark (1998) found that 38% of men reported intrusive thoughts of forcing someone into sexual activities; and, in general, men report more frequent fantasies of sexual dominance than do women (Briere, Smiljanich, & Henschel, 1994; Knafo & Jaffe, 1984, Miller & Simon, 1980; Person, Terestman, Myers, Goldberg, & Salvadori, 1989).

In extreme cases, men may use sexual violence against a sexual partner. In a meta-analysis of 39 studies, Murnen, Wright, and Kaluzny (2002) found that, across 11 different measures related to masculine ideology, all but one measure was found to be significantly associated with sexual assault. Empirical studies have found that adversarial interactions between violent men and their female victims are sexualized, thereby increasing the probability of sexual victimization (Malamuth, Heim, & Feshbach, 1980). This finding is confirmed by laboratory studies in which some heterosexual men were found to experience sexual arousal in response to audiotaped scenarios of rape scenes (Lalumiere & Quinsey, 1994; Lohr, Adams, & Davis, 1997). One trait that has been shown to predispose men to perpetrate sexual aggression against women is hypermasculinity. Hypermasculinity has been defined as a personality trait that predisposes men to engage in behaviors that assert physical power and dominance in

interactions (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). Hypermasculine heterosexual men assert power and dominance over women by engaging in various behaviors, such as sexual aggression, that serve to uphold the masculine identity (Parrott & Zeichner, 2003). High levels of hypermasculinity are associated with past sexual aggression (Gold, Fultz, Burke, Prisco, & Willett, 1992; Mosher & Andersen, 1986) and are a significant predictor of future sexual coercion (Norris & Kerr, 1993; Vaas & Gold, 1995).

Until recently, sexual coercion among gay and bisexual men was believed to be nonexistent. This lack of awareness of sexual violence perpetrated by males against other males may be affected by several factors. First, male sexuality portrays men as continually ready and willing to have sex. Second, institutional heterosexism and a heteronormative climate that continue to marginalize gay and bisexual men, and gay sexuality, converge to prevent gay and bisexual men from reporting all except the most extreme cases of sexual assault (Davies, 2002). However, in those studies that have been conducted, a fifth to a third of gay and bisexual men report having experienced some form of sexual coercion perpetrated against them by men (Krahe, Scheinberger-Olwing, & Schutze, 2001; Ratner et al., 2003; Stermac, Del Bove, & Addison, 2004). Whether by direct force or the way in which men describe being unable to outrightly refuse sex, many of these reports of sexual assault echo experiences of heterosexual women in their experiences of unwanted sex with heterosexual men (Braun, Schmidt, Gavey, & Fenaughty, 2009; Gavey, 2005). The frequency of sexual assault perpetrated by both heterosexual men and gay and bisexual men may suggest that there is an element of masculine socialization that influences men to rape (Kimmel, 2000).

Although the above description of the Centerfold Syndrome includes germane research and conceptualization about gay and bisexual men's sexual self-schemas, the Centerfold Syndrome as articulated by Brooks (1995) made no claims on sexual minority men's sexuality. Brooks' themes offer a matrix that organizes our understanding of male heterosexuality. These tenets also identify many of the negative psychological consequences of male sexuality that lead to a vast range of behavioral problems, including relationship difficulties, addictive behavior, and loneliness. Yet, there has remained considerable work to be done to further identify and describe heterosexual male sexual self-schemas, as well as outline similarities and differences in the sexual self-schemas of gay and bisexual men. There are few data on self-schemas describing these sexualities. For heterosexual men, the concepts that make up men's sexuality have been disguised or dismissed because of the subtle socialization and the unquestioned, invisible nature of heterosexual men's sexuality. For gay and bisexual men, what is known about sexuality lacks consistency and is inadequate in detailing the themes of gay men's concepts of sexuality (Cameron, Collins, Drinkwater, Hickson, Reid, Roberts, Stephens, & Weatherburn, 2009). A coherent theory explaining how these schemas interact and affect the male psyche must be further developed and questioned.

Elder, Brooks, and Morrow (2012) initiated the project of building theory that addresses the sexual self-schemas of heterosexual, gay, and bisexual men in their qualitative research on heterosexual men's self-schemas. Their findings both confirmed and extended that of Brooks and provided the groundwork for developing a coherent theory of heterosexual, gay, and bisexual men's self-schemas. These findings are described below.

Exploring the Constructs of Heterosexual Men's Sexual Self-schemas

Using grounded theory qualitative research methods, Elder, Brooks, and Morrow (2012) conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with 21 heterosexually self-identified men of varying ages, ethnicities, occupations, education levels, relationship statuses, and religious/ spiritual orientations. The interview questions inquired about how participants saw other men dealing with their relationships (emotional, physical, and spiritual) with women and asked them to talk about their relationships with girls and women over their lifetimes, both friendships and romantic relationships.

The Model of Male Heterosexual Sexual Self-schema that emerged from Elder's research (Figure 1) was described as a series of three relationships. These included Men's

Relationships With Other Men   Relationships With Women   Relationship With Self

Avoidance of Emotional Talk with Men
- Homonegativity

Sexualization of Women's Bodies
- Frequent activity
- Porn vs. real life

Competition for Women

Discomfort with "Opening Up"
- Difficulty with emotional talk
- Sex instead of emotional intimacy

A Desire for Sexual Validation

Learning That Resulted in Change
- Women encouraging men to open up

Shame at One's Sexual Behavior
- Betraying women
- Betraying self
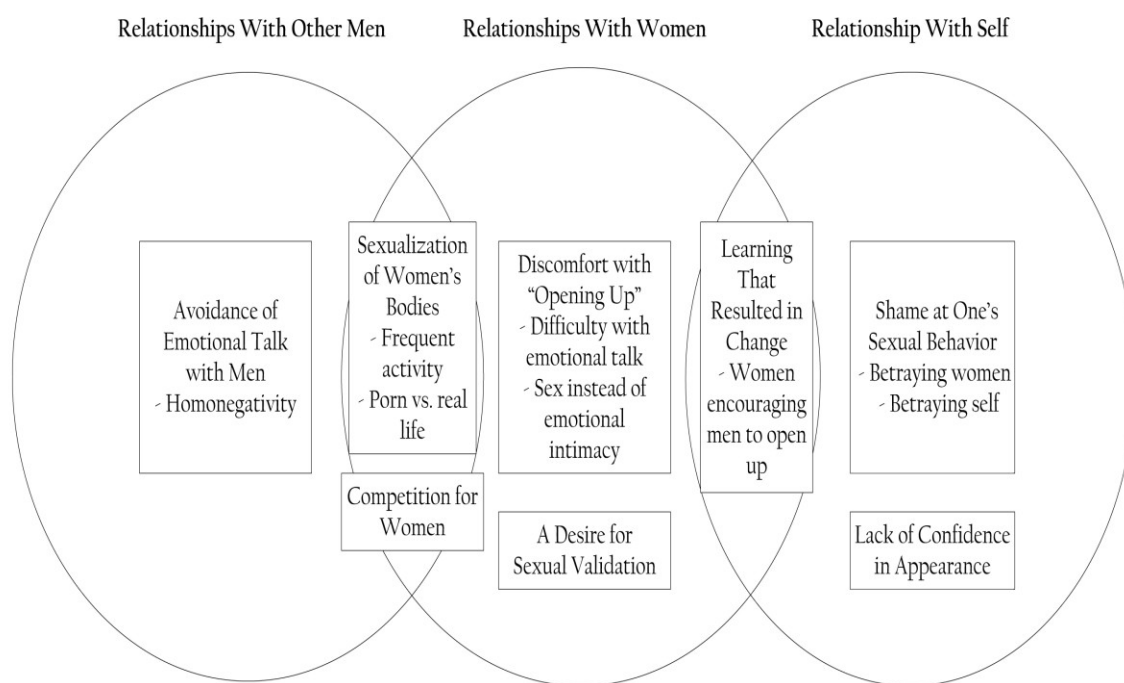
Lack of Confidence in Appearance

Figure 1. Model of Male Heterosexual Sexual Self-schema

Relationships with Other Men, Relationships with Women, and Relationship with Self. The themes that emerged included sexualizing women's bodies, lack of confidence in appearance, competition for women, a desire for sexual validation, discomfort with "opening up," avoidance of emotional talk with men, shame at one's sexual behavior, and learning that resulted in change. Significant multicultural elements of the themes were also explored. The eight themes that emerged from the study were situated among these relationships in order to illustrate their interrelationships and effects.

The highly dysfunctional aspects of the sexual schemas described in this model, as well as those Brooks suggested in his model, the Centerfold Syndrome, do appear to be interconnected and form a syndrome that impairs men's ability to connect to others and maintain proper mental health. However, this previous study's results add significantly to the Centerfold Syndrome structure. Much of this may be attributable, at least in part, to historical context. For example, the widespread availability of pornography has only served to intensify a climate of the presentation of women's bodies as sexual objects, as well as a focus on sexuality and orgasm over sensuality and emotional connection (Doward, 2001).

Elder, Brooks, and Morrow's (2012) work also set the stage for a larger investigation and development of theory that includes gay and bisexual men. In light of the topics suggested by Brooks (1995) and the findings of Elder, Brooks, and Morrow (2012), it is particularly important that theory be constructed from the data of heterosexual, gay, and bisexual men's lives in order to be grounded in their experience and infused with their meanings.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of the current study was to describe the sexual self-schemas of gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men based on gender role socialization. The sexual self-schema was defined as a cognitive generalization about sexual aspects of the self, as derived from past experience, which guides current experiences and facilitates in the processing of sexual information (Markus, 1977). This research used as its starting point the schema framework of traditional male sexuality outlined by Brooks (1995), including five central aspects of male heterosexuality referred to as "The Centerfold Syndrome," namely, voyeurism, objectification, the need for validation, trophyism, and the fear of true intimacy, as well as findings by Elder, Brooks, and Morrow (2012). However, this study also took into account a sexual minority male's construction of gender and masculinity as related to his sexual orientation identity and unique concepts of what it means to be a man. Using these concepts, the question that guided the research was: How do gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men understand their own and other men's sexual self-schemas?

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Sexual self-schema research is yet in its infancy, and there is surprisingly little known about what comprises male sexual self-schemas. To delve into the complexities and processes of male sexuality, qualitative methodologies were selected to best elicited tacit knowledge and subjective understandings and interpretations. This type of research facilitated data collection with both sexually experienced and inexperienced individuals and also best negotiated the complexities of gathering information regarding sexuality.

Qualitative methods were selected for this investigation because of the need to use an inductive, exploratory approach to develop a clear theory base grounded in the participants' experiences. Qualitative research methods can "more clearly capture the complexity and meaningfulness of human behavior and experience" (Morrow & Smith, 2000, p. 199). The intricacy of the meaning participants have made of their experiences is made possible by permitting more openness to findings and accessing participants' full description of their realities (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Finally, there is a need for alternative methodologies to be employed in the study of men and masculinity. The majority of research in the area of men and masculinity (over 80%) relies solely on quantitative methods, and nearly 60% of these studies were primarily correlational (Whorley & Addis, 2006). This may lead to a more general tendency of placing importance or value only on those phenomena that can be quantified. In their study of the greatest number of methodologies used in masculinity research, Whorley and Addis (2006) suggested that making greater use of a diversity of methods, including qualitative methods, is important for the future of masculinity research for a number of reasons. First, diverse research methodologies will allow for further examination of masculinity schemas beyond simple linear relationships. Second, diverse research may examine the direction of influence between various masculinity norms and other psychosocial professes. Third, research relying on only quantitative methods often leads researchers to dismiss contextual or multicultural constructs that could be meaningful mediators of men's experiences. Finally, correlational methods presume the stability of individual differences and focus on these trait-like variables.

In sum, qualitative methodologies have rarely been utilized in the field of research in the psychology of men and masculinity. Qualitative methods will be a crucial addition to future study of men's lives and may be more congruent with our most basic assumptions about men. Findings from studies that do not rely on correlational measures may influence researchers to examine new kinds of research questions, resulting in new theoretical understandings of how men make meaning from their experiences.

<p style="text-align:center">Significance of this Study to Counseling Psychology</p>

Counseling Psychology (Division 17) was one of the first divisions of the American Psychological Association (APA) to recognize the importance of the psychology of men. A special issue of *The Counseling Psychologist (TCP),* titled *Counseling Men,* introduced men's issues to counseling psychology (Skovholt, Gormally, & Schauble, 1978). The goal of this special issue was to "contribute to understanding male roles and the ways human services professionals can promote the growth of men" (Skovholt et al., 1978, p. 2). The final pages of the manuscript called for empirical research that "would allow counseling psychologists to speak to the public more authoritatively on the dangers of restrictive sex-role socialization for men, women, and children" (O'Neil, 1981, p. 76).

Over the past 30 years, the high percentage of published research by counseling psychologists in the area of men and masculinity indicates that counseling psychology has been the most significant contributor to knowledge about men's gender role conflict and has responded to earlier calls for research on men's psychological problems (O'Neil, 1981a, 1981b; O'Neil et al., 1995; O'Neil, in press). However, new ideas and more

expansive studies of the psychology of men are needed to further demonstrate that there is no singular or core masculinity (i.e., White, middle class, heterosexual, North American). Exactly how sexual self-schemas affect men is one of the most crucial issues to be assessed in the psychology of men and counseling psychology. Helping a male client redefine cognitive scripts of what it is to be a man may be a significant tool in improving men's ability to share intimacy with their partners, friends, and family members (Kimmel and Fracher, 2005). Psychologists need to be knowledgeable about the cultures of masculinity (including gay and bisexual masculinities), challenge and identify messages manifest in the larger sociocultural context that lead to sexual and relationship problems, and offer corrective emotional experiences to heal these masculinity templates (Blazina, 2001; Good, Thomson, & Brathwaite, 2005; Kashubeck-West & Szymanski, 2008; Worell & Remer, 2003).

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

<u>Paradigms Guiding the Research</u>

Traditional psychological research in counseling is based upon a positivist,

quantitative approach to understanding human problems. This creates the illusion of a

singular truth and a belief in objectivity that covertly privileges the perspective of the

researcher over the subject's, client's, or patient's reality. Because this system of

positivism has dominated psychological research, investigators within that paradigm have

not had to define the system under which they operate (Morrow, 1992). It is left to those

researchers who approach phenomena using a different paradigm to fully articulate the

epistemological viewpoint upon which their methods are built.

This chapter begins with an overview of the epistemology that guided this

research. The two major branches of thought that formed the basis of this study were

social constructionism and feminist constructionism. In order to understand social and

feminist constructionisms and their relevance to research on the sexual self-schemas of

gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men, it is helpful to have an overview of the major

epistemological themes of these two approaches to the production of knowledge.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism refers to the social basis for knowledge construction. This paradigm is concerned with understanding how human beings make sense of the world in which they live, as an active construction of knowledge rather than a passive reception (Guidano, 1987; Guidano & Liotti, 1983). All cognitive phenomena involve active participation (Mahoney, 1991); and individuals construct understanding of their experiences, themselves, and other people (Gergen, 1985). Of this construction of knowledge, Scarr (1985) wrote, "We do not discover scientific facts; we invent them" (p. 499). Belenky (1986) likewise underlined that "all knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known" (p. 137).

Social constructionism posits that reality is not discovered, but it is invented and reinvented over time. Understandings of the world are based upon interactions among people, as well as interactions between individuals and their environments. Through these interactions, interpretations informed by values and attitudes become "facts." Because of the context involved in the interpretation, these resultant facts are not in any way detached or politically neutral (Gavey, 1989).

Feminist Constructionism

Feminist thinkers were among the first to advocate social constructionist approaches to scientific inquiry. Many feminists see social constructionism as an alternative to traditional science, which has a history of subjugating others (Bleier, 1984). Feminist theory also pairs well with constructionist tenets because both endorse actively building knowledge through environmental and interpersonal interactions. For example,

the feminist concept of the "personal as political" implies that personal experiences are always entrenched in a social and political context. Both feminism and constructionism assert that context is central to any analysis.

An essential aspect of context is power. From the beginning of feminist academic work, feminist researchers have attended to the imbalance of power between the researcher, who has the ultimate control over the interpretation of data, and the researched, who may have little control over the analysis and the conclusions drawn from their accounts. Feminist research viewpoints are committed to freeing and empowering groups that have traditionally been deprived of power and voice by subverting epistemic authority (Brodsky, 1973; Firestone, 1970). This has often been accomplished by allowing space for participants to articulate their goals in the feminist collaborative creation of knowledge.

The vast majority of empirical research conducted on masculinity, and men's sexuality specifically, have focused on the individual abstracted from his context (Cowburn & Pringle, 2000). This assumes that the researcher is able to extract not only the participant, but also him- or herself from race, class, and social aspects and consider data in an objective way. Nicolson (1995) suggested that traditional approaches to psychological research have excluded power and structural relations. Of special concern to feminists is that these methods fail to identify the consequences of patriarchy, therefore reinforcing "natural" behaviors based in gender stereotypes.

It has been asserted that any analysis of masculinity must examine aspects of power (Kimmel & Kaufman, 1995). Feminist models that stress mutuality and collaboration may better serve the needs of male participants and deconstruct the power

dynamics inherent in masculinity (King, 2000). Incorporating feminist theories into this dissertation included analysis of the socio-political context of the researcher and the participants, including issues of power, privilege, and gender role socialization (Morrow, 1992). This study moved toward creating additional terminology and articulation of additional masculinities outside of heteromasculinity, including articulation of gay and bisexual male gender identities and sexual self-schemas.

Masculinity literature has tended to shy away from analyses of context; likewise has gay studies research. Unlike feminist and lesbian cultures, gay men lack a strong tradition of critical analysis of power relations within their communities (Wood, 2004). This may be because gay men are still deeply identified within a heteromasculine culture. Gay studies have primarily conceptualized the political and psychological context of gay men based on heterosexism and homonegativity, which, while key influences, are not sufficient to create a gender analysis of gay men's lives (Herek, 1996; Ritter & Terndrup, 2002). This focus continues to make the issue of gender oppression virtually invisible as we continually focus on sexual orientation instead of gender as the central category of analysis.

More recent queer theories, including those of Judith Butler (1990, 1993), argue that categories of sex are socially constructed as gender. Although gender and sex are typically seen as a binary of culture (gender) versus biology (sex), Butler's theory of gender as performance demonstrated that even ostensibly constant categories such as "female" and "male" are illusory because "sex" and "gender" are constructed (Pennington, 2009). To "create the illusion of an inner core" (Butler, 1990, p. 139) or a lasting identity, individuals must engage in repetitive acts to establish that certain

behaviors belong to either masculinity or femininity. This reasoning also extends to the category of sexuality (Gagnon & Simon, 2005/1973), where sexuality is a social construction (Foucault, 1978/1990). Lesbian and gay sexualities, for example, are gendered practices that are organized with reference to woman and men, respectively, as partners (Connell, 1999).

Many feminist scholars have examined the role of power in relationships between women and men. It is commonly presumed that in heterosexual couples one partner will have more power than the other or be the "head of the household" within the relationship. Stereotypically this person is the man, the "top," or the "butch" member of the partnership (Pennington, 2009; Segal, 1997), and it is her/his role to initiate the relationship, initiate sex, make decisions for the couple, and hold a position of power within the relationship. This reinforces the dualistic categories woman/man and masculine/feminine.

Where, then, does that leave bisexual men in terms of power and gender expression in romantic relationships? The literature on bisexuality as behavior and sexual orientation identity is limited (Pennington, 2009) and conflicting. While there is some research that suggests bisexuals may act on conventional gender stereotypes and power dynamics in their relationships and sexual encounters with men and women (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1977; Bode, 1976; Shokeid, 2002; Weinberg, Williams, & Pryor, 1994), other literature argues that bisexual men may act according to traditional gender norms in their relationships with women, but not with men (Vernallis, 1999). That is, a bisexual man's gender performance may vary depending on the sex/gender of his partner (Pennington, 2009).

There has been some argument that bisexuality disrupts dichotomous categories of sexual orientation and identification and opens up new possibilities through fluidity of experience (Firestein, 1996; Garber, 2000, Rust 1995). However, others argue that bisexuality relies in various ways on the fixed categories of gender and sexuality that currently exist. Bisexuality as an identity requires the classification of heterosexuality and homosexuality as referents for its meaning (Vernallis, 1999). As such, it is debated whether bisexuals should be inscribed within queer politics or pursue another political agenda (Pennington, 2009).

To return to the importance of the consideration of context, the idea of honest accounting of context and power is similar to the concept of "incandescence" written of by Virginia Woolf (1929). "Incandescence" in writing refers to the idea that the writer's or researcher's work should be free of emotions rooted in dependent relationships or reactions to powerful, dominant forces. Making evident the context of the researcher and the participants is an effort to free the knowledge-producing process from reaction to and restriction by the dominant culture's notions of gender and sexuality. A researcher can be creative and proactive when he or she is free to deconstruct powerful, dominant discourses while gathering data. Incandescence is achieved by honestly owning one's own perspective and accounting for the context and process by which certain conclusions were reached.

In summary, queer theory assertions that gender is performative and wholly constructed is central to the qualitative feminist paradigm (Butler, 1990; Lorber, 1994). This idea has shifted research possibilities from a traditional interest in discovering inherent differences between the genders to a complex matrix of material, racial, and

historical circumstances (Oleson, 2005). In other words, gender is no longer considered the causal explanation in research but is the sum of multilayered, contextual, personal variables. Qualitative methodologies, which explore these elements among others, are harmonious with these feminist goals.

Feminism and Social Constructionism

When the two theories, social constructionism and feminism, are combined, the researcher has a variety of tools with which to understand knowledge. The two views together also map out goals and actions that emerge from new understanding. Morrow (1992) outlined ten principles that emerge from combining feminist and constructionist theories in qualitative research. These include (1) the rejection of the possibility of absolute truth and objectivity, along with the valuing of subjectivity; (2) a conviction that morals and values have a prominent place in the scientific endeavor; and (3) a belief that knowledge is socially constructed and that the social context of men's and women's lives is an essential component of their psychology. Feminist constructionism also involves (4) an analysis of social structures and of power and (5) a commitment to plurality, multiplicity, and diversity. Feminist research (6) legitimizes an activist agenda, (7) includes self-reflectivity and self-criticism, (8) establishes a collaborative stance with the participants in the research, and (9) is committed to the highest standards of research. Finally, feminist research is characterized by (10) "giving voice" to those who might not otherwise be heard.

<u>Researcher as Instrument</u>

Disclosure of researcher assumptions from the beginning of the research and presenting how subjectivity was managed are important components of rigor in qualitative research (Morrow & Smith, 2000). In this case, this study was written by a man using a perspective (feminist) that male qualitative researchers do not commonly utilize. This is important because of the potential for self-conscious and politically involved responses to the many steps in the process of being a man theorizing about men.

Self-Reflection Regarding Masculinity

For male researchers generating new theory about men, problems can arise without a continual self-examination of their own relationship to masculinity (Hearn, 1998). For example, if I avoid thinking about my own culturally embedded masculinity, I perpetuate the notion that these variables should not be discussed or examined closely. Much of the data described in the literature review above is research that is removed from the experience of the researcher(s). In these empirical procedures, men's active roles in the gender-producing and gender-consuming process are not identified within the context of power. Neglecting to examine power and privilege, as well as gender socialization, excludes a rich and insightful range of additional data.

As a feminist-identified man, I intended the results of this study to originate from a process of constantly questioning my own privilege and documenting new awareness. It is important that male contributions to feminist research engage in continuous reflexivity in order to be divisive of gender privilege (Levinson, 1998). Questioning my relationship

to the data became the subject of critical self-reflection and additional insight into men's sexuality as socialized by male gender roles (Johnson & Samdahl, 2005).

As a feminist therapist conducting empirical research, interviewing men for this study naturally caused me to incorporate my developed role as a feminist clinician into my role as a researcher. Rather than challenging men's socialized scripts as I would during therapy as we explored men's life difficulties, during this study rapport improved and I gathered more information by simply listening without judgment. Although it was my hope that the process of being interviewed generated positive outcomes for the participant in terms of increased self-awareness and self-acceptance, the focus of this study was not to generate change within the participant. There were moments, however, when I experienced a well-developed rapport with an interviewee and I asked him to consider why he believes or behaves in the way he explained.

Researcher Background

I use this section of the study to frame my background, experience, and assumptions. Having grown up gay in a rural, conservative, and religious environment, I began thinking about gender and sexuality at an early age. Despite a good deal of internalized heterosexism as a result of my cultural upbringing, with time I have become more comfortable with my sexual orientation identity and have expanded my concept of traditional gender roles. I attribute my previous discomfort regarding homosexuality to witnessing many episodes of physical and emotional violence based on sexual prejudice that occurred to others and to me throughout my life. But I attribute the relaxation of these fears to positive experiences with other men, personal struggle, and social support.

This framework of personal narratives led to the growth of an intense interest in the psychology of men and masculinity, especially the experiences that men have that change what they think a man can and should be. It is from this perspective that the dynamics of male sexuality within the context of hegemonic American masculinity have been an integral challenge and question since boyhood.

This personal history guided the research process by familiarizing me with the participants' concerns, perceptions, and development of masculinity and sexuality. In conducting this analysis, I was motivated to recognize and challenge my assumptions about the way men form sexual self-schemas in order to better identify common factors that tied together participants' experiences, as well as produced a clearer understanding of the varieties of participants' experiences. My own approach to this research was to encompass a self-reflexivity between my own experiences and my interactions with the topic, with an overarching commitment to social change.

Because of a long-standing effort to "pass" as heterosexual, instilled from a very early age as a strategy to avoid social difficulties, my own gender expression and much of my own sexual self-schema was guided by heteromasculinity performance. This allowed some insight into the experiences shared by heterosexual participants. However, the realities of being gay and familiar to deviations from heteromasculinity facilitated understanding of the experiences of gay participants. This dual familiarity with heteromasculinity and gay masculinities would be consistent with the ideas of Brown (1988), who wrote about the bicultural perspective potential afforded to gay men that allows them to be fluent in both the heterosexual and the gay cultures. Although I cannot pretend to understand the perspectives of bisexual men, I consider that my familiarity

with both heteromasculinity and gay masculinities served as a basis for understanding the forces impinging on bisexual masculinities as well. In effect, I believe this perspective allowed me to create a relationship with each participant that recognized and validated each member's socialized way of expression.

The Importance of Self Reflection

Glaser (1978) advocated self-reflection as a critical component of qualitative research. This involves attention to the researcher's underlying ways of making meaning of her or his experiences based upon her or his own dispositional factors. This awareness is impossible to achieve without researcher reflexivity, which is an ongoing process of in-depth consciousness raising. This is a process that is integral to much of the feminist constructivist research (see, for example, Oleson, 2005). Although objectivity is not a standard for qualitative research, and was not a goal of this study, awareness of my own and the participants' subjectivities was an important source of data and was critical to data analysis.

I depended on self-reflection to adhere to the original intent of the study. As I collected data and worked to form a cohesive theory originating with the men in this study, I kept an analytic notebook with ongoing notes about my experiences, thoughts, processes, and emerging conceptualizations. This was an important method to account for how data were organized and how my own dispositional factors played a role in the formation of theoretical relationships.

This self-reflection regarding gender during data analysis was not always a seamless or easy process. Wood (2004) suggested that gay men have avoided dealing

with analyses of gender oppression because it is an issue even more deeply seated than heterosexism or homonegativity. Due to gender nonconformity, there are early experiences of personal trauma associated with not adhering to traditional masculinity long before experiencing discrimination based on sexual orientation (Rottnek, 1999). For example, I have been teased for my lack of athletic abilities since childhood; however, I have felt shame for dating men only during a specific period of my sexual orientation identity development before achieving a sense of self-acceptance. I would agree that my history of gender oppression is frequently the source of greater discomfort for me to examine than my sexuality. In many contexts, including with groups of gay men, there may be acceptance of my sexuality, but there is not always an accompanying acceptance of a wide range of gender expression. My own sense of deficiency is more often related to my failures at heteromasculine performance than to my sexual orientation. For many gay men, gender issues are much more pervasive and profound than those of sexual orientation, with internalized gender oppression being more problematic than internalized heterosexism (Wood, 2004). I admit I am just beginning to understand the extent to which gender oppression has affected my own life and identity development.

I was aided in my efforts to engage in self-reflexivity by consulting regularly with members of my qualitative research team, my dissertation chairwoman and committee members, colleagues, and particularly the participants in the research. Throughout the data analysis, I called upon peers in my research group for assistance and feedback. This gave me the opportunity to generate additional or rival hypotheses, to disprove the working hypotheses that were generated along the way, and reminded myself to search for disconfirming evidence.

Research Design

Qualitative, illustrative, and theory-building research is needed to bring about a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of human psychology. Qualitative research is especially valuable in understanding human behavior because of its focus on the individual and social construction of meaning within a social context. These approaches make use of the metaphors and stories that individuals use to construct and organize the meanings they make of their lives. Qualitative research is much like the process of storytelling, story-recreating, and story-clarifying that occurs in psychotherapy (Howard, 1989).

In designing this study, it was important to use an epistemological basis that took into account the complexity of men's conceptualization of sexuality. It was also critical that the methods made use of the principles of feminism and allowed space for my own voice in theorizing the commonalities among participants' narratives. As I considered the most appropriate method, I knew that the freedom to use my own voice would need to be tempered with adequate structure for systematic generation of data and data analysis.

The research design selected for this project followed a grounded theory methodological approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory has been described as the most influential paradigm for qualitative research (Patton, 2002). This method uses an inductive process to develop an empirically based theoretical model of a phenomenon and has been at the forefront of qualitative methods (Ponterotto, 2005). The theory assumes that people construct their realities through social interactions in which they use shared symbols (e.g., words) to communicate meaning (Fassinger, 2005). Data analysis thus revolves around discovering

the meanings created in these social relationships (Cutcliffe, 2000). The aim of this study, using grounded theory methods, was to produce innovative theory that was "grounded" in data collected from participants on the basis of the complexities of their lived experiences in a social context. The goal of this research project was to generate theory about constructions of heterosexual, bisexual, and gay men's sexual self-schemas from the gathered data. Because grounded theory is specifically designed to facilitate theory-building, I chose this design as the core method for data gathering and analysis.

A grounded theory approach was also selected because of its congruence with a feminist/constructionist paradigm. This procedure accepts multiple socially constructed realities and truths, with a focus on the interpretative influences brought by the researcher, using extensive quotations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Morrow & Smith, 2000; Ponterotto, 2005). Making sense of these meanings required paying attention to participants' values, self-concepts, personal agency, and motivations, as well as how participants went about achieving their goals. Particularly for counseling psychologists interested in diversity and social justice, grounded theory is naturally integrated into feminist approaches whose aim is to bring about social change (Fassinger, 2005).

Grounded theory grew from pragmatic social science research that emphasized action and problem-solving methods (see John Dewey, George Mead, and Charles Sanders Peirce). The theory was formulated at the Chicago School of Sociology, which stressed field observation and extensive use of interviews in conducting research, highlighting the need for immersion by the researcher in order to understand processes. As this theory developed as a data analysis strategy, Strauss (1987) identified five basic assumptions that underlie this qualitative analysis. First, a diverse collection of materials

may be gathered as potential data sources. Second, there is a need for theory-building based on, or grounded in, qualitative data. Third, theory should be adequately dense and conceptually complex to account for a wide range of variation. Fourth, qualitative data analysis should follow general guidelines that may be applied across theoretical approaches and disciplines. And finally, research is work, and the work process may be used in the qualitative analysis (Morrow, 1992).

Strauss defined qualitative research as a process of thinking, going to the field, observing, interviewing, note taking, and analyzing. This involves generating questions, making links between concepts and insights, and collecting new data. The researcher integrates categories, and the research develops into broader and broader patterns that are defined and described.

Participants

The focus of qualitative inquiry is on describing and understanding the human experience. The unit of analysis is experience, rather than people or groups (Polkinghorne, 2005). This requires gathering a string of full, concentrated, and intense accounts of the phenomenon being studied. Participants in a qualitative study are selected because they can provide significant contributions to the structure and character of the experience under investigation.

The selection process involved in this study was to purposively select participants to serve as substantial contributors. Selection was not random or left to chance, but was planned. Participants were chosen because they are exemplars of the experience for study and provided rich data (Patton, 1990). The goal in the selection of the multiple

participants in this sample was to create a triangulation on the experience, locating core meanings by approaching the experience of gender and sexuality through different accounts (Polkinghorne, 2005). This allowed the researcher to move beyond a single view of the experience.

Selection of interviewees remained open throughout the research process. After several initial accounts were collected, they were analyzed to construct a rough sketch or a theory of the experience. On the basis of the preliminary description, additional participants were selected who were thought to be able to fill in, expand, or challenge the initial description (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Heterosexual research participants were recruited for the first phase of this study through advertisements placed in a wide range of locations, including religious community centers, civic centers, and recreation centers, as well as electronic postings. Gay and bisexual participants were recruited through these venues as well; in addition, I also posted similar ads electronically in gay- and bisexual-oriented online communities. The posters and ads for the first phase (heterosexual men) asked for participants for a study on men's romantic relationships, and I offered participants 10 dollars for their participation in the interview. I followed this same procedure with the gay and bisexual participants.

As I purposively sampled the participants, I continued to balance as much as possible age, religious background, relationship status, education, socioeconomic standing, and adherence to traditional masculinity, just as I did in the first phase of the study. The selection strategy used was maximum variation sampling, in which I selected participants with the most divergent forms of the experience (Patton, 1990). The strength

of this approach is that any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core, central, shared aspects or impacts of a phenomenon. In choosing this technique, my goal was not to attempt to generalize findings to all people or all groups, but to look for information that clarifies variation and significant common patterns within variation (Patton, 1990).

The following is a summary of the demographic information of the heterosexual participants from the earlier study, which provides an understanding of how these individuals identified their backgrounds in relation to their unique perspectives. All of the 21 participants from the sample identified as heterosexual. Interviewees included 12 participants who identified as White, two as African American/Black, three as Latino, one as Native American (Navajo), one as Indian (Asian), one as Asian, and one as Pacific Islander. The participants' ages ranged from 20-64, with a mean age of 34. Thirty-five percent of the participants were in a committed nonmarital relationship, 27% were married, 14% were divorced, and 24% were single. Forty-seven percent of interviewees had obtained a high school diploma, 18% had a bachelor's degree, 10% had a master's degree, 10% had an MD, 10% had a PhD, and 5% had a JD. Twenty-seven percent indicated Latter-Day Saint as their religious affiliation (which was a result of the high concentration of LDS individuals in the area of the country where the data was collected), while 24% indicated "none," 24% were Christian, 5% were atheist, 5% indicated "spiritual," 5% were Buddhist, 5% were Jewish, and 5% were agnostic. All participants were assigned pseudonyms.

For the extension of this study, I gathered data from 20 gay and 20 bisexual participants. Of the gay participants, 10 identified as White, 3 as Black, 3 as Latino, 1 as

Native American, 1 as Indian, 1 as Asian, and 1 as Pacific Islander. All participants were given pseudonyms. Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 50, with a mean age of 34. Twenty-five percent of the gay participants were in a committed nonmarital relationship, 10% were married, 5% were widowed, 5% were polyamorous, and 55% were single. Thirty percent of gay interviewees had obtained a high school diploma, 35% had a bachelor's degree, 20% had a master's degree, 10% had a PhD, and 5% had a JD. Forty-five percent indicated agnostic as their religious affiliation, while 10% were Christian, 5% were Catholic, 20% indicated "spiritual," 5% were unsure, 5% were atheist, 5% were Buddhist, and 5% were Hindu. The majority of gay participants (85%) were open regarding their sexual orientation to all, and 15% were open to some (for example, not out to their families or coworkers).

Of the bisexual participants, 10 identified as White, 4 as Black, 4 as Latino, and 2 as Pacific Islander. All participants were given pseudonyms. Participants' ages ranged from 21 to 48, with a mean age of 30. The majority of participants were single (80%), while 15% were in a committed nonmarital relationship, and 5% were married. Thirty-five percent of interviewees had obtained a high school diploma, 15% had an associate's degree, 25% had a bachelor's degree, and 25% had a master's degree. Forty-five indicated LDS as their religious affiliation, while 20% were agnostic, 15% were Catholic, 5% were Christian, 5% were Episcopal, 5% were Jewish, 5% indicated "spiritual." Forty-five percent of the participants were open regarding their sexual orientation to all, 50% were open to some (for example, not out to their families or coworkers), and 5% indicated not open with anyone about their orientation.

Contracting for participation in the research was accomplished at the initial individual interview with each participant. Also during the initial interview, the Informed Consent (Appendix A) was presented and discussed, providing a thorough description of the nature of the study, the expected commitment, and the rights of participants. If, after discussing the letter and consent in detail, participants agreed to participate, we both signed two copies of the consent. The participant kept one copy; I filed the other in a manner assuring confidentiality. Each participant in the study was also asked to fill out a "Participant Information Form" (Appendix A), which recorded demographic information.

After an initial phone call or email from a prospective participant, I spoke briefly with each man by telephone to set up our initial interview. After each interview, I had occasional contact by telephone with participants to address questions that arose from the analysis and to gather more data. After the data collection concluded, I was available to the men by phone or email for additional discussion; however, no further formal meetings were held with the participants.

Leave-taking occurred as a gradual process. At the termination of the focus group, I made it clear that I would be in contact with the group periodically to update them on the status of the project and for further discussion of the data analysis. I invited all participants to review drafts of the analysis, to continue a collaborative relationship, and to be involved in the project through writing the final draft. I anticipate maintaining a collaborative relationship with several of the participants. I also hope to follow up with all of the participants in the future to obtain a more longitudinal perspective on evolution of their sexual self-schemas.

Formally, my role in the research was one of participant-observer (Adler & Adler, 1987). In that capacity, I interviewed participants and facilitated three focus groups. I interacted in various ways: as researcher, group participant, and friend. As an openly gay man, I have had a variety of experiences developing a sexual self-schema that differed significantly from those of some of the participants. As such, I do not believe it was possible to become a complete member researcher (Adler & Adler, 1987), or to adopt entirely the world-view of participants. Because I am not familiar with the experiences of the heterosexual or bisexual participants, I was not able to move into those perspectives with ease. In addition, it was my hope to critically observe without becoming too involved in my own stories and processes during data collection to the neglect of those of the participants. I do believe, however, that I was able to achieve a level of rapport and inclusion with participants that was comfortable and intimate. It was my goal not to avoid emotional involvement with participants, and I did not establish a predetermined distance from them, adopt role pretense, or pretend to be involved at a deeper level than I really was.

In establishing myself as a participant-observer, I discussed my excitement in sharing the project with the participants and framed the research as a collaborative, mutual process. During the interviews and the focus group, I explained the research process and engaged the participants in portions of the analytic process. In this way, I immersed myself, as much as possible, in the field and allowed myself to become the research instrument. I regularly engaged in self-observation and analyzed my involvement in the study as a gay man.

<u>Sources of Data</u>

Multiple sources of data were gathered to form a triangulation of information sources. Sources of data were myself (the researcher as subject), individual interviews with participants, and the focus groups.

Researcher as Instrument

The personal experiences and attitudes of the researcher are a major contributing factor to in-depth research. Academic interest often plays a secondary role to personal motivators as a mental health professional narrows her or his particular area of specialization. I expect that this is also the case for researchers as they guide both their methodological preferences and the topics they choose for study. My own personal and clinical experiences have been the prevailing stimuli for my interest in the psychology of men and masculinity. For this project, my own values, thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and life experiences were both tools and data.

My involvement in data gathering and analysis (the researcher as subject) were documented in a number of ways. I added excerpts from my personal journals, drawing from them any observations or perceptions I made about men's sexuality that were relevant. I kept an ongoing journal for the first phase of the research that included a chronological recounting of the study, as well as my personal reactions and questions. I continued this record during the current investigation. Following my contact with participants, I detailed my reactions and thought processes during the interview. This was not only to provide an additional source of data, but also to document my own subjectivity. I explored my feelings about and interactions with the participants.

All of these self-examinations were used both to analyze the data and to provide additional data in the research. As a result of this study, I learned a great deal about the complexities of men's experiences with sexuality. I challenged my own understanding of masculinity socialization and questioned my own sexual schema as a gay man.

Individual Interviews

Phase One: Heterosexual Participants

The research participants were asked to participate in one to one-and-one-half hour interviews in order for me to establish relationships with them individually and to explore the meanings they have made of their sexuality. I provided options of private and comfortable meeting spaces: one location on the university campus, the other a private office in a commercial building. Based on Kvale's recommendations (1996), the goal of the interview was to establish an atmosphere in which the participant felt safe to talk freely about his experiences and feelings. The interviewees were provided with a context for the interview in a briefing before beginning the major portion of the conversation. The interview began with greetings, introductions, and explanations of the project and interview process. The Informed Consent was explained and signed. Following signing of the Informed Consent, I obtained the interviewee's permission to turn on the digital audio recorder. I shared relevant personal, academic, and professional information about myself with participants. I described my expectations of participation and invited questions about the focus group, the research project, and myself.

After completing this initial briefing, the interview began. I followed an interview guide that indicated the topics and their sequence in the interview. This guide followed a

semistructured format and contained two general topics to be covered with suggested questions should the interviewee not address certain critical topics. I explained that I had only two open-ended questions. These questions had been formulated to be answererable by interviewees in terms of their experiences and knowledge. The first question for the heterosexual men was, "How do you see other heterosexual men dealing with their relationships with women (emotional, physical, spiritual)?" The participants spent from 30 to 45 minutes responding to this question. The second question for heterosexual men, which took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to discuss, was, "Please tell me about your relationships with girls and women over your lifetime, both friendships and romantic relationships." Rubin and Rubin (2005) pointed out that these broad initiating questions encourage the conversational partners to provide an unfiltered "tour," in which the interviewees act as guides, walking the researcher through their turf while they point out what they feel is most important along the way.

The main questions evolved as I learned more about what was important to the interviewees. First, I gave the interviewees the opportunity to answer the broad questions as they saw fit. Then I added auxiliary questions regarding issues they raised that I wanted to explore more specifically as they related to my research concerns. This involved reworking questions to come up with narrower and more specific inquiries.

In addition to asking the two open-ended questions, my participation consisted primarily of verbal and nonverbal encouragement to continue (including head nodding, "yes," "uh-huh," "oh, yeah"), assurances of my interest in their experience, and indications that I agreed or had had a similar experience. There were no time constraints put on the respondents. I emphasized my belief that the participant was an expert about

his own experience, restating and incorporating the participants' words and illustrations. I facilitated the ending and debriefing by asking if there was any additional information the participant would like me to know about his experience. If there was not, I thanked him for his participation and gave him information about the upcoming focus groups.

All interviews were audio recorded. I transcribed verbatim, word-for-word interviews by typing notes directly from listening to the digital recording (the only omitted utterances to the transcriptions were non-word sounds when this indicated thinking, such as "uh," "um," "hmm," and "mm," and body sounds, such as laughs and coughs). I also made field notes following the interviews and during and after transcribing the recordings. All interviewees were sent a copy of their interview to check for accuracy, to ensure their confidentiality was protected, to add any information to their interview, or to omit any part of their interview.

Considerations in interviewing heterosexual participants. In the first phase of the study, I attempted to conscientious about the language I used in the interviews, knowing that language varies in meaning across context, individuals, and environments (Spradley, 1979). I was aware that, in interacting with heterosexual men, my own internalized homonegativity, as a result of years of trying to "play straight," created for me an alternate way of being. For example, I often manipulated my speech and behavior in ways that I perceived as more comfortable and more convincing to heterosexual men of my credibility, not only as a researcher, but also as a man. Additionally, my own socialization into and internalization of many of the aspects of heteromasculinity had the potential initially to obscure some insights. However, through the self-reflective process, I believe I was able to address these concerns.

Frost (1998) framed a paradigm of a false-self/real-self dilemma that exists for the gay therapist, wherein he can feel the need to affirm his gay positive identity while also feeling the need to remain therapeutically aloof. But it is undetermined whether self-disclosure of gay sexual orientation with a straight client and/or research participant would contribute to collaboration, power-sharing, or participants feeling encouraged to further their own self-disclosure. This is because there has been very little research on the nature of homonegativity and heterosexism related to the self-disclosure between a gay therapist/heterosexual client or gay researcher/heterosexual participant (Frost, 1998; Slatterly, 2004). Although initially there may appear to be many barriers to the research process between a gay researcher coming out to his heterosexual participants (such as homonegativity and fear of emotional intimacy), I believe there are aspects of such an open relationship that may facilitate collection of certain data. For example, I found that if I was open to discuss my identity, I was able to make my own self-consciousness of the language of these interactions an open part of the discussion with the participants. This dialogue regarding the newness of some information, or my self-consciousness in discussing certain topics, such as homonegativity, became a powerful tool in gathering data from interviews with heterosexual participants. In general, I disclosed my sexual orientation to heterosexual participants when I felt it was appropriate to the topic, when I felt it would facilitate authentic rapport, or when I was asked directly.

As a gay researcher studying heterosexual men, I utilized my life-long experience of listening, as on outsider, to heterosexual men discuss sex to gather insight into how heterosexual men perceive their sexuality. I avoided, as much as possible, any urges to

present an inauthentic persona. Ultimately, I listened as much as possible, gradually moving toward more natural and collaborative interactions.

An additional strength that a gay researcher may bring to a study of heterosexual men's sexuality is that gay men are less likely to display as many gender role specific behaviors as heterosexual men do and have a greater capacity to model fluidity within gender roles for other males (Riddle, 1978). Liljestrand, Gerling, and Saliba (1978) found that male clients in therapy generally considered therapy successful when either the male therapist or the male client deviated from the traditional male gender role as compared to when both parties conformed to such stereotypes. In light of such findings, gay qualitative researchers may be considered effective researchers with heterosexual participants in part due to their less rigid gender roles.

The strategy I used as a gay researcher with heterosexual male participants in managing homonegativity was modeling self-disclosure, not necessarily of information about my own personal past, but of my in-the-moment inner thoughts and observations of the interactions I had with participants. This "transparency," or "congruence" in Rogerian theory (Rogers, 1961), is honest expression of the professional self in therapy (Jourard, 1964; 1971). Being transparent with the participant about my "intrapersonal present" (Cherbosque, 1987) is to have nothing in my experience of the relationship that is hidden, which is also congruent with the co-creation of meaning integral to feminist constructionism. Empirical support of this dyadic reciprocity strategy in creating a comfortable environment for self-disclosure has been documented in a number of studies (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Chaikin & Derlega, 1974; Cozby, 1973; Jourard, 1971; Jourard & Friedman, 1970).

Given the feminist paradigm for the research, intrapersonal present self-disclosure worked toward establishing a context of power-sharing. This collaboration was emphasized as I learned from men rather than simply gathering data about them. My own socialization into heterosexuality, as well as my openness about my experiences and feelings, contributed significantly to that mutuality. In addition, I invited participants to provide feedback about the research process and my own articulated thoughts and feelings in order to empower the research participants.

In examining additional potential language barriers in this study, another consideration was how to formulate the interview itself in order to not shape the respondents' views and understandings of themselves and their sexuality (Morrow, 1992). It is not possible to avoid influencing and being influenced by participants, nor is it desirable to do so in a constructivist framework. However, I was able to memo and document collaborative construction of meaning as the project has progressed. I anticipated enjoying mutual construction of the process with the participants. I was fascinated to shape, with the help of the research participants, theory about their sexual self-schemas.

Phase Two: Gay and Bisexual Participants

I followed similar procedures in interviewing gay and bisexual participants as I used for heterosexual participants. For gay men the first interview question was, "How do you see other gay men dealing with their relationships with men (emotional, physical, spiritual)?" And, for bisexual men, the question was, "How do you see other bisexual men dealing with their relationships with women (emotional, physical, spiritual)?" "How

do you see them dealing with their relationships with men?" The participants spent from 30 to 45 minutes responding to this question. For gay men, the second question, which took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to discuss, was, "Please tell me about your relationships with boys and men over your lifetime, both friendships and romantic relationships." For bisexual men, the second question was, "Please tell me about your relationships with boys and girls, men and women over your lifetime, both friendships and romantic relationships."

As in the interviews with heterosexual men, these broad initiating questions encouraged the interviewees to act as guides, pointing out what they felt was most important along the way. I added auxiliary questions regarding issues gay and bisexual men raised that I wanted to explore more specifically as they related to the research. There were no time constraints put on the respondents, and all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. I also made field notes following the interviews and during and after transcribing the recordings. All interviewees were sent a copy of their interview to check for accuracy, to ensure their confidentiality was protected, to add any information to their interview, or to omit any part of their interview.

Considerations in interviewing gay and bisexual participants. I was conscious of the fact that my gay subjectivity affected the way in which I interacted with the gay and bisexual participants. I was aware of the possibility that communication and data collection with gay and bisexual men was somewhat facilitated by our shared experiences. This may have resulted in collection of greater amounts of data from these participants. I also recognized that there was much about the bisexual men's experiences that I learned about for the first time. I was conscious of maintaining a professional

demeanor as a participant-observer, focusing on the goals of this research and the participants' narratives.

Interviewing gay and bisexual participants posed other considerations for me as a researcher surrounding my own subjectivity, specifically being open about my sexual orientation. I disclosed my own sexual orientation to gay and bisexual participants as part of the informed consent and study background portion of the interview because I felt that withholding that information would disable the relationship (Cornett, 1995). I am resolved in my sexual orientation identity, and it is an accepted element of my selfhood. Disclosure of my identity appeared helpful to the participants in receiving acceptance with regard to their sexual histories and facilitated disclosure of important data because of a sense of understanding.

An additional consideration for me in terms of disclosure was the potential to see the gay and bisexual participants in my day-to-day life. Because of the limited number of gay-oriented spaces in the city, there continues to be a greater possibility of encountering these participants following the conclusion of the study. Should I have not disclosed my sexual orientation, I would have been concerned that participants might feel a sense of betrayal should I meet them out after they had confided in me and relied on me to accurately represent their voices. Although I resolved that honest relating and empathy were essential as I worked with all study participants, the responsibility to be genuine caused me to disclose my own sexual orientation to the gay and bisexual participants at the beginning of the interview, before participants signed the informed consent forms.

Finally, the experience of interviewing all participants was an occasion for me to confront my own sexual socialization, internalized homonegativity, and history of

feelings of love and attraction for other men. Talking about these topics was healing in my own process as I identified unaffirmed aspects of my sexual and gender identities. It required me to work out my own internalized schemas, to be vulnerable to participants' unconscious communications, and to challenge myself to open up to a true relating (Balick, 2007).

Focus Group

Phase One: Heterosexual Participants

The focus group for heterosexual men was an opportunity for participants to make additional comments beyond their original responses and also an opportunity to respond to others' comments. It was an opportunity for participants to consider their own views as compared to the perspectives of others (Patton, 1990). I conducted the focus-group discussion in order to analyze, adjust, and confirm the theoretical model developed from their interviews.

The group met one time for approximately 2 hours, after all of the interviews were completed. I included a discussion of how I constructed the model and presented an emerging analysis; then, I cocreated with participants a model that fit their experiences. As part of this process I revisited the importance of confidentiality.

In planning the focus group, participants were given maps to assist them in finding the group meeting location, which was held in the conference room of an office suite in a commercial building. I explained that the meeting would be audio-recorded and utilized as a source of data for the project. After clarifying my role, I asked participants to introduce themselves in whatever way they wished. Next, I asked them what they each

would like to understand about how heterosexual men think about sex. I then determined the remainder of the agenda for the session by examining the participants' interviews, grouping questions and issues into themes that appeared most salient to the group, and then formulating a leading question for each topic. I brought paper and pens for the participants to jot down any thoughts, emotions, or experiences that came up for them as a result of the dialogue. After this session, I wrote in my research journal about the experience and any process insights that arose. Sources of data from the group included the audio recording from the group meetings, field notes based on the meetings, the notes of the participants, and notes on incidental and informal communications between researcher and participants before or after the official beginning of the group dialogue.

Phase Two: Gay and Bisexual Participants

I followed similar procedures in the focus group for gay and bisexual participants as I used for heterosexual participants. I held three focus-group discussions, after all of the interviews were completed. Each discussion lasted approximately 2 hours. Participants were encouraged to contribute to the research questions and direction. The focus groups were comprised as follows:

1. One focus group explored gay men's sexual self-schemas. Six participants attended the focus group: 3 men of color and 3 White men.

2. One focus group explored bisexual men's sexual self-schemas. Six participants attended the focus group: 3 men of color and 3 White men.

3. One final focus group was an integrated discussion from samples of gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men. I asked them what they each would like to

understand about how gay, heterosexual, or bisexual men think about sex, depending upon their respective group sexual orientation identity. Eleven men participated in this group, including four bisexual men (three men of color and one White man), four gay men (two men of color and two White men), and three heterosexual men (two White men and one man of color).

As in the focus group with heterosexual men, I determined the agenda for these sessions by examining issues and themes that appeared most salient to the group. After these sessions, I wrote in my research journal about the experience and any process insights that arose. Sources of data from the group include the audio recordings from the group meetings, field notes based on the meetings, the notes of the participants, and notes on incidental and informal communications between researcher and participants before and after the official beginning of the group dialogue.

This section has outlined the sources of data used in the study: the researcher as subject, individual interviews, and the focus group. These data sources were the basis for the data corpus, consisting of digital audio recordings, transcriptions, field notes, my personal and research journals, and supplemental notes taken by the participants during the focus group. It was this data corpus that I used for the analysis.

Data Analysis

Data can be gathered in the form of interviews, audiotapes, videotapes, field observation, documents, diaries, books, periodicals, and the personal reflections of the researcher. For this particular study, I gathered data in the form of interviews and focus

groups with the participants. I transcribed the digital recordings of the interviews myself in order to compile the data corpus and check the accuracy of the transcription.

Because of the great amount of rich data, and the richness of possibility for theory generation, coding of the data was a key component this grounded theory data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). I began coding early and coded data continuously, immediately following early data-gathering. I completed three types of coding (open, axial, selective) according to a method of constant comparison.

During the first level of coding, *open coding*, I studied the data sources and divided them into segments of text (words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs) that contained a single idea or theme that illustrated the participant's experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). I labeled these segments in language used by the participants themselves. Next, I compared each segment to every other segment, and developed overarching categories according to similarities. I gave these categories labels to depict their specific groupings. Although these labels may not have always matched participants' actual language, I chose labels that reflected their underlying meanings (Fassinger, 2005).

The second level of coding in this grounded theory analysis was *axial coding*, in which I compared relationships among categories, looking for commonalities between them in order to determine interrelationships (Fassinger, 2005). I used four different kinds of comparisons: 1) comparing and relating subcategories, 2) comparing categories to new data, 3) expanding the density and complexity of the categories, and 4) exploring variations in the data and reconceptualizing the categories and relationships as necessary. Through this process, I developed a clearer pattern across participants and properties

within categories, helping to identify and specify interrelationships. I began to formulate a theory that fit the experiences described by the interviewees (Fassinger, 2005).

In the final stage of analysis, *selective coding*, I created substantive theory. This began with "selective" coding, in which I selected a central or "core" category that integrated all of the other categories into a whole (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I generated a brief story, or a brief narrative of the most important aspects of the data, subsuming all of the other categories and articulating their relationships to the core story (Fassinger, 2005). I formed a diagram to illustrate these connections and how each participant depicted his or her own experiences. This visual representation also brought to light the interrelationships among the constructs and their subcategories.

This process of constant comparison contributed to the development of a hierarchical model that described the experience of participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At the completion of the analysis, I formed a single, core category to encompass the participants' experiences. Although there may have been some redundancy of patterns, each participant added a unique perspective by describing a certain aspect of the model more intensely than the others (Beckstead & Morrow, 2004). I constructed the model based on repeated cycles of examining data and placing pieces together to ensure that no single interview received disproportional weight, and that no participants were marginalized. This theory-building then led to results that illustrated the intricacies of the experiences men described of their sexual self-schemas.

In order to maintain a sense of "groundedness, " I used the process of writing memos throughout the research process. This enabled me to make transparent my interpretive, constructive processes (including evolving ideas, hunches, insights, feelings,

uncertainties, etc.) and provided a record of my conceptual, procedural, and analytic questions and decisions (Fassinger, 2005). In this study, I wrote memos to facilitate my awareness that data were experiential. That is to say, my own personal, social, and scientific experiences were an integral part of the data. The use of memos ensured that the analysis was grounded in the data and was used to search for disconfirming evidence and to record decisions and theoretical ideas during the analysis. In grounded theory, the writing process is itself an integral component of data analysis. Thus, through this process, I was led back to the original data and became aware of gaps in my understanding, and reevaluated possible theories (Morrow & Smith, 2000).

In the first phase of the investigation examining the sexual self-schemas of heterosexual men, I developed a conceptual model, which was described in Chapter I of this proposal. I also developed individual conceptual models based on the additional data from gay and bisexual men. Finally, I synthesized and integrated the models to illustrate a conceptual model of heterosexual, bisexual, and gay men's sexual self-schemas. Based on this synthesized model, I used principles recommended by Morse, Stern, Corbin, Bowers, Charmaz, and Clarke (2009) to develop a grounded theory of heterosexual, bisexual, and gay men's self-schemas.

Summary

In this chapter, I have described the research methods used in this study. Beginning with the formulation of the paradigms guiding the research, I also described how my own disposition was an instrument in the collection, analysis, and formulation of the data. I described the sources of data and the process of data collection, and I outlined

the multiple roles and relationships that composed this study. Finally, I addressed the ways in which I analyzed the data and conceptualized the patterns and themes that emerged. In the chapters that follow, I will relate the stories of the men who participated in this study and illustrate the conceptualization of the data gathered in the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

From the outset, the sexual self-schemas of gay and bisexual men were the focal

point for this research. The predominant question that guided the research was, "How do

gay and bisexual men understand their own and other men's sexual self-schemas (such as

voyeurism, objectification, the need for validation, trophyism, the fear of true intimacy,

and others)?" This chapter begins with an analysis of the gay sample of interviewees,

followed by an analysis of the bisexual participants. Three types of models are outlined in

this chapter. First, each participant's data were integrated into a theoretical model (one

for gay participants, another for bisexual participants) that highlights both the variability

and conformity of experiences across interviewees. The model attempts to capture the

salient issues in these men's lives as their recounted their attitudes and experiences

surrounding heterosexuality. Second, participants' data were integrated into a process of

change model (one for gay participants, another for bisexual participants). These models

explained the process through which sexual behavior and attitudes shifted through time.

Finally, an integrated theoretical model was formed to encompass the experiences of gay,

heterosexual, and bisexual participants. Brackets (i.e., []) indicate changes made to quotes

for clarification.

Gay Participants

Seven themes of sexual self-schemas were disclosed by the gay participants in this study. These themes emerged from categories developed through the data analysis and, as closely as possible, match the language and the underlying meanings of themes presented by the participants in the study. As they were analyzed, the schemas fell into the following topics:: (1) Internalized Homonegativity, (2) Pornography and Sexual Orientation Identity, (3) Physically Attractive Men, (4) Managing Sex and Social Perception, (5) Competition for Men, (6) Sex and Emotion, and (7) Commitment and Work.

In addition to these seven themes, data analysis also captured a process of transition in participants' sexual self-schema over time. As interviewees had dating and sexual experiences, they described change in the way their perceived themselves, as well as relationships. Following description of themes, The Process of Sexual Orientation Identity Development is outlined. This process is a conceptual framework that describes how (1) experiences and (2) cultural influences affect the (3) development stages and transitions of gay men's sexual self-schemas.

Certainly, all of the schemas described by participants have been influenced by a cultural context. Over the course of the interviews, it became apparent that, within certain areas, there were noteworthy differences in how the themes played out based on cultural background. Within these themes, I will narrate variations among participants that involved cultural influence or the diverse background of interviewees. Although differences may have occurred within each of the topics, it appeared that the largest

discrepancies occurred within four of the themes: Bodies, Sexual Validation,

Uncomfortable Opening Up, and Homonegativity.

Themes:

1. Internalized Homonegativity
2. Pornography and Sexual Orientation Identity
3. Physically Attractive Men
4. Managing Sex and Social Perception
5. Competition for Men
6. Sex and Emotion
7. Commitment and Work

Process:

1. The Process of Gay Sexual Self-schema Transition

Internalized Homonegativity

During the course of the interview, 16 men discussed issues of homonegativity

that were influenced by their cultural background and by heteromasculine norms. This

theme is divided into four subsections. First, interviewees believed men who were not

open about their sexual orientation identity suffered from more internalized sexual

prejudice. Second, sexual prejudice varied by ethnic/racial background. Third,

homonegativity was closely tied to gender performance, specifically as related to

effeminate men. Finally, interviewees pointed out that gay men may enter into a

relationship in order to find some social validation.

Among Not Out Men

Interviewees perceived gay men who were not out yet as dealing with internalized

homonegativity. These men were often perceived as being embarrassed to be seen with

"out" gay men for fear of being identified as gay. They were seen as more likely to have frequent nonrelational sex and to avoid long-term, committed relationships. Brett explained, "If men are not out, it leads them to seek that [nonrelational] avenue for sex rather than something more." Interviewees said that when they met men for anonymous sex whom they had met on online chat sites or from electronic postings, often those men were not out.

Cultural Background as Contributing to Homonegativity

Among interviewees of diverse backgrounds, there appeared to be meaningful differences, often attributed to cultural background, in this baseline acceptance of homosexuality. Latino and Black men described that their cultures endorsed comparatively higher levels of sexual prejudice than the dominant culture. For example, Joe described a strong link between heterosexuality and masculinity common in the Latin American community in which he grew up, as evidenced by a common practice for a father to take his son to a female prostitute in his early teens "because they want you to become a man." The Latino interviewees, however, also said that White men were less physically affectionate (hugging, massaging, holding hands, etc.) and less romantic than Latino men. The Native American and Pacific-Islander interviewees expressed that there was less homonegativity within their own communities, which made living as gay easier within their cultures than in the White, dominant culture.

There was a high level of cultural homonegativity for men from strong religious backgrounds. Interviewees mentioned that, frequently, religious gay men often defended their church or religious views, even when their church did not affirm their sexuality or

life choices. Men who had been actively involved in religious communities prior to coming out stated that overcoming a strong sense that they had morally made the wrong "choice" was an important part of their development. For example, Matt explained that he kept his long-term relationship with his boyfriend from his religious family, even though his relationship had lasted as long as his brother's marriage. He realized that on some level he had privileged his brother's relationship as "normal" and that he did not feel that his relationship was worthy of his family's acknowledgement or validation.

"Femme-Phobic"

Based on comments made by interviewees, "femme-phobia" is fear of or discrimination toward effeminate gay men by other gay men. This theme emerged in discussing the importance of being "straight-acting" in the gay community, a discomfort with feminine men, as well as behaving in a heteromasculine manner as a way to overcome further marginalized from mainstream, heteromasculine power. Ned explained:

> It's about being femme-phobic; it has nothing to do with sexual orientation. It has everything to do with gender and gender identity and gender roles. And I have totally seen masculine, or more straight-acting gay guys ripping on more effeminate types of guys. I tend to think that those guys are a little more insecure about their own gender identity…and with their notions of power and who gets to have it.

Femme-phobia was also demonstrated in comments made about effeminate gay men. For example, fourteen interviewees made one or more of the following comments: describing feminine-acting men as being "fake," "queeny," "flaming," "annoying," "loud," "stereotypical," "divas," or said they would never date a man who was effeminate, were embarrassed to be seen with effeminate men, or would not have effeminate friends. One interviewee expressed, "I always joke that it was great with my

generation because we had all the gay beaten out of us, whereas this younger generation is just ok with being whoever you are." Often, following derogatory comments about effeminate gay men, interviewees would attribute these negative feelings to simply not being attracted to effeminate men, explaining that their attraction was not something they felt they could control, or that because of their strong identification with heteromasculinity they were only attracted to other heteromasculine gay men.

Although more than half of interviewees did not equate these kinds of comments with homonegativity, eight interviewees explained that they had experienced as much or somewhat more homonegativity within the gay community as from the "straight world." Participants described gay spaces such as bars and clubs as intensely femme-phobic spaces. As an example of gay men making femme-phobic comments, one interviewee explained gay men sometimes comment that effeminate gay men bring more discrimination from heterosexuals. Homonegative expressions from gay peers were also described as more emotionally hurtful than homonegative comments from heterosexual peers because of the in-group closeness, the sense of shared experience, and the mutual need for social support.

Nine of the interviewees pointed out that, because of avoidance of femininity, gay men may avoid certain behaviors, such as empathy, compromise, emotional expression, and generosity, that are valuable in a relationship. Jayke said, "Whether or not they fit the bill in the gay community's checklist for a perfect boyfriend, gay men reject a whole range of characteristics that are actually really useful in a relationship." This rigidity with adherence to heteromasculine standards may also affect a man's willingness to participate

in a wide range of sexual behaviors and can also negatively impact the sexual aspect of

his relationships.

Only one interviewee disclosed that he did not feel he was perceived as

traditionally masculine. He expressed feeling at a disadvantage in finding potential

partners. He explained that, whereas in heterosexual relationships, and even in lesbian

relationships to some degree, there is a place for one partner to be more feminine, in gay

culture, there is no place for a feminine man in a relationship. He explained that

heteromasculine men were only attracted to other heteromasculine men.

Finding Social Acceptance Through a Relationship

Interviewees pointed out that, especially soon after coming out, gay men may

seek out a relationship in order to feel their sexual orientation is validated by the

community. Collin elaborated:

> For many younger gay men, they're looking for validation from their community,
> their peers, their families most of all, and the only way that they feel that they're
> going to get that is to be with somebody. And at that point in time, coupling
> actually can become more important than the person that you're doing it with. But
> then you stand back and you realize that what they share is an immense desire to
> be with someone, to be in this lifestyle, and be sharing this life with someone.

In this case, men may prematurely assert that they are in a relationship within a few

weeks of dating; they may make indirect public statements, for example, on social media

websites, or at bars and clubs, about their new relationship status. This may relax an

internalized heterosexist fear that by being gay they are somehow unlovable, or that by

choosing to be gay they will ultimately be alone.

The essence of the Internalized homonegativity theme was a sense of shame a gay

man develops because of a sense of being separated from heteromasculine power. This

was due to one's identification as gay, or a sense that one was not living up to standards of masculinity. Men may have varied in their level of internalized homonegativity due to multicultural factors; but, overall, all interviewees privileged hegemonic masculinity performance, or spoke out against men behaving in a manner associated with femininity.

<div align="center">Pornography and Identity</div>

Jess recounted, "Even since I was little I've been looking at porn, it's just who I've always been. It's kind of part of who I am, I guess." This theme highlights four key points. First, pornography was widely accepted by all interviewees as an integral part of their lives. Second, participants explained they initially learned about sex and relationships through viewing pornography. Third, interviewees explained that pornography is central to gay culture. Finally, a small group of participants felt that pornography instilled in them unrealistic ideas about sex.

Pornography as an Acceptable Sexual Outlet

All of the gay men in this study discussed pornography as an acceptable, frequent part of their lives, often beginning in early adolescence. John affirmed, "I have a big collection of pornography. I don't know any gay man who doesn't." Men who were single explained that pornography aided in, as Dave put it, "staying out of trouble"(e.g., nonrelational sex, sexually transmitted infections, the potential emotional distress of having sex with someone in whom they were not interested for a long-term relationship, or being potentially rejected by someone they approached for sex). Men also mentioned it was a faster, more efficient way to meet one's sexual needs than to find an anonymous

sexual partner. A frequently mentioned boundary for pornography use, however, was viewing pornography instead of engaging in sex with your partner, or impairment in a man's sexual relationship because of pornography use.

Although men who were partnered said they used pornography less often, pornography was mentioned as useful for many reasons. First, partnered men said that pornography met their needs for sex following a natural decline over time in sexual activity with their partner. Second, pornography was valued as a way to eschew infidelity. For example, several of these interviewees said that viewing pornography helped them avoid any "temptation" to have extrarelational sex. Third, four men reported they watched pornography with their partners as a way to "create a mood." Only one of the interviewees said that pornography had ever negatively impacted his relationship.

Pornography and Sex Education

Fifteen gay men discussed that they had learned the details about how men behave sexually with other men from watching pornography. Joe said, "Porn was like a TV school for sex." These interviewees explained that there is a complete lack of sexual education regarding gay sex, and pornography provided the opportunity for men to see and understand the technicalities of sex. It was also a way of normalizing the idea of physical and emotional intimacy with another man, especially because they did not personally know any openly gay couples. For example, Guru said, "I came to terms with my sexual orientation through pornography." The partnered interviewees described having learned ideas about how to keep the sexual elements of their relationships

interesting and active from viewing pornography, or using pornography as a way to begin discussions with their partners about sexual matters.

Pornography and Gay Culture

Pornography was seen as a ubiquitous element of gay culture. Men interviewees discussed talking with their friends about their pornography preferences, and several interviewees discussed downloading pornography onto their phones or attending events at gay clubs or bars where pornography actors hosted or made guest appearances.

Gay pornography was described as setting the standard for what gay sex should be, especially soon after men began to be sexually active. This included actors in pornography who behaved in traditionally masculine ways. Jayke described gay pornography as "masculinity all the way: bigger, better, longer, taller, wider, stronger." There were also implications for race, gay culture, and pornography, as most men of color described a dearth of pornography involving actors of color; in fact, the Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and Indian interviewees all said they had seen very little, if any, pornography depicting men of their racial backgrounds.

Porn Versus Real Life

Five interviewees pointed out that pornography had given them unrealistic expectations about sex. Bentley said, "Pornography sets a standard for how sex should be that is outside the norm." However, with frequent viewing, these expectations affected how participants interpreted their sexual performance and the performance of their partners, which could lead to disappointment and shame. These men expressed that, because of the depiction of sex in pornography, they were frustrated by their sexual

experiences in terms of duration of sex, frequency of sexual activity, and their sexual creativity. They were also more nervous they would not meet the expectations of their sexual partners and worried that their sexual abilities would determine if they could find a relationship. Matt illustrated this when he said, "I'm competing with the pornography image…and wondering why I'm single."

Pornography was also mentioned as overemphasizing the centrality of sex in a relationship. These men explained that, because pornography depicted only sex and not the emotional element of a relationship, they conceptualized gay relationships as being primarily about sex. With relationship experience, these men said they came to realize that sex had a much less key role in determining the happiness or the longevity of a relationship.

In sum, Pornography and Identity describes the relationship gay men have to pornography and how identity formation takes place in relationship to viewing these depictions of sex between men. Pornography was seen as a positive resource for learning about sex and gay culture, and an outlet for meeting one's sexual needs. Although pornography may depict a wide range of possible sexual activities, for some interviewees viewing pornography also created a false expectation of sexuality.

Physically Attractive Men

All participants recounted that being attractive in the gay community is of utmost importance. This theme outlines, first, participants' comments about what makes an attractive man and why it is important to be attractive. Second, interviewees underlined that being attractive was of extreme importance. Third, despite the focus on

attractiveness, participants also explained that they had negative beliefs about the character of attractive men.

What Is Physically Attractive

Twelve of the 20 interviewees stated that the most attractive part of a man was his face, or facial features, such as eyes, or smile. Five interviewees stated simply that there was no one part of a man that was most attractive, but they looked in general for someone fit, or as Matt put it, "someone who takes care of himself." Possible explanations for why these men did not objectify a specific body part (such as arms, chest, legs, etc.) included the fact that, if they narrowed their specifications for attraction too narrowly, it would significantly reduce the number of potential partners. Others explained that gay men are able to have a wide range of sexual experience with many different kinds of partners and thus can value many different physical attributes.

Eighteen interviewees said they were exclusively attracted to gay men who were "straight-acting," or heteromasculine, and none of the interviewees said they were attracted to effeminate men. William summed up many men's sentiments, "I am not the least bit attracted to anybody that is effeminate or acts like a woman." Traits that were considered heteromasculine included a muscular and physically fit body, a deep voice, a self-assured gait, body hair, a traditionally male style of dress, making direct eye contact, and having mannerisms (such as hand movements and holding one's head steady and forward) that were equated with hegemonic masculinity. Interviewees equated heteromasculinity with confidence, with certainty in one's gender and sexual identity, and with power. These interviewees pointed out that, for men who are attracted to men, masculinity and masculine gender identity is an essential element in what they find

attractive. The two men who said they were not exclusively attracted to heteromasculine men were the Pacific Islander and the Native American men. Both of these interviewees recounted that, as a result of having a difficult time finding men to date who were attracted to men of color, with time they became open to dating men who were not stereotypically masculine. Interestingly, these interviewees were also the only men of color who reported being attracted to other men of color.

Seventeen interviewees stated that they were primarily attracted to White men. Seven of the men of color stated that they have never been attracted to men of their racial background and have only exclusively dated White men. Only three interviewees, the Pacific Islander, the Indian, and the Native American men, stated that they were equally attracted to a wide range of racial backgrounds. Nine of the 10 men of color stated that it had been difficult finding White men to date because White men most often only dated other White men. Ben elaborated, "There's a lot of racial profiling in gay dating. I feel like gay guys usually have a type, and for some that type is not ethnic. I don't feel like there are a lot of guys who go easily among ethnic groups." This was often attributed to the fact that the city where the data was gathered was not a major urban area. Men of color explained they had had experiences in large, urban areas where they felt they had more opportunities to date and where White men more frequently dated men of color. Dole recounted, "The majority of the gay community here likes to see reflections of themselves. I go to New York City at least once a year and it's a difference experience being there."

The Importance of Being Attractive

All interviewees stated that it was extremely important in the gay community to be attractive. Bentley stated, "Being attractive in the gay world is very important"; and nearly all men said they felt that it was more important to be attractive in the gay community than it was for men to be attractive in the heterosexual community. Collin explained that being attractive was "a form of currency" that could be traded not only for the attention of other attractive men for sex or relationships, but for a wide range of opportunities, including occupational advantages and social power. Being physically attractive also could bring one social power despite character deficits, such as a lack of integrity, conversational ability, humor, or intellect.

Being attractive also means the potential to be the most desirable sex partner. When asked about what made a sexual encounter "good," fourteen of the interviewees stated that, in the gay community, sex with an attractive man is generally always considered the best sex. Jess said, "Good sex is sex with a hot boy. That's what it is for me." However, not all of these interviewees endorsed this belief. Ned elaborated, "In the gay community, there is sense that the best looking guys will result in the best sex. And I think that there is absolutely no correlation."

Bias Against Physically Attractive Men

Thirteen interviewees expressed that they avoided attractive men as potential partners. The primary explanation for avoiding attractive men was that, in getting to know the good-looking man better, it becomes apparent that he has significant character flaws. Mark stated, "I can see a really beautiful man; as I get to know him, I see what his

insecurities are…often times being the pretty guy is what makes that person feel good about himself." In addition to viewing attractive gay men as insecure, other comments about attractive gay men included the assumption that they were arrogant, "stuck up," "shallow," "too much drama," unfaithful to their partners, in need of excessive amounts of attention, and selfish. Because attractive men had relied almost exclusively on their appearance to manipulate others, some interviewees argued, they have not had to develop a wide range of virtues, professional abilities, or interpersonal skills. Because attractive men frequently have difficult personalities, it becomes necessarily, as Joe put it, "to sacrifice something, compromise," when it comes to appearance, in exchange for someone whose personality is more desirable.

Men also said that after having negative experiences dating attractive men, as they continued dating they eventually began to value attraction less and place more value on character elements in a potential partner. John said, "You realize that's all they are—just hot. There's nothing to really talk about. Attraction now for me is just somebody who relates to me, who would get along with my family, and who's down to earth. That's my attraction."

These interviewees also commented that being with someone who is attractive is not always the most desirable experience, not because of the character of the attractive man, but because it makes them insecure about their own appearance. Matt clarified, "If someone is very attractive, I feel inferior about myself. It makes me more comfortable… if I'm with someone that I don't see as extremely good-looking." Participants stated that they avoided attractive men because of a fear of rejection, because it made them nervous,

or because they felt they had to be hypervigilant lest they find someone more attractive to date. Jay explained:

> I feel like I have to watch what's going on because someone else is going to come along and catch their eye and I'm going to be out of the picture; so I need to watch and always be on my toes, always making sure that everything in the relationship is perfect, so they don't have a wandering eye. I probably would never feel secure.

In summary, interviewees placed significant emphasis on being attractive. Being attractive allowed men access to social power, a wide range of potential partners, and professional opportunities. Men who were considered most attractive were White and had heteromasculine attributes, such as a muscular build. Finally, interviewees also commented that being attractive resulted in significant character deficits that made some men leery of forming relationships with them.

Managing Sex and Social Perception

A theme emerged among interviewees outlining how to manage others' impressions of them, or a conscientiousness about how one is perceived and how to strategically negotiate that perception. Steven said,

> I heard someone say, "The most important thing you have as a gay man is your reputation." And I was like, "Oh, my God, how terrible. That means we're always just performing." You take this idea of reputation, and you have a lot of people who are trying to appear very well, to appear kind of good and stable and clean."

This quote summed the sentiment of most men about certain social interactions; participants were also concerned about how to not appear promiscuous to peers and also how to not hurt the feelings of those you meet up with for sex. This theme is divided into two subsections. First, participants explained that they had had sex with men in order to avoid injuring the self-confidence of these men. Second, interviewees discussed how they

avoided being perceived as promiscuous by not discussing their sexual activities or their attractions with peers.

Have Sex to Be Nice

All interviewees disclosed that they had had sex with someone at some point in time in order to not hurt their sexual partner's feelings. Rather than telling someone they were unwilling to have sex and because they were not attracted , these men agreed to sex because they knew it would be a brief, one-time encounter. When asked why he had had sex with someone when he did not want to, Ned summed up a very commonly given answer, "I call it 'charity work.' I didn't tell them I didn't want to because I was trying to be sensitive to their feelings." Coupled participants in open relationships where the couple had group sex said they occasionally had sex with someone they were not attracted to because that was what their partner wanted.

Avoid Being Considered Promiscuous

Fifteen of the interviewees explained that gay men rarely casually discussed their sexual activities with other gay men unless they were close friends. Most of these interviewees explained that if a gay man has had sex with a number of men, regardless of the level of attractiveness of the sexual partner, that man would be considered a "slut." If a gay man disclosed about his sexual experiences, he was more likely to do so with a close friend, a small group of friends, or female friends, rather than a large group of friends or in a public setting. When asked when and with whom gay men share information about sex, Jay explained,

> You only do it with select people. It's not something you talk about. There are some people that do share that information. I just don't think they have social filters. They don't know right from wrong. It's usually reserved for close friends.

Bentley remarked,

> I can't think of a time…I just can't think of anyone talking about, "Oh, somebody was so good in bed." Honestly, if it were talked about, everyone would perceive them as being a slut, so it wouldn't necessarily be perceived as a positive thing in the gay world.

Others echoed this attitude, saying that gay men do not routinely "brag" about their sexual experiences, their level of sexual ability, or the positive validation their partner gave them as a result of the sexual experience. Even when disclosing this information, they may be vague or say only that they "hooked up" with someone in order to avoid judgment. Steven explained, "But hooked up is pretty broad. It's really safe. I don't know what that means exactly."

Another reason these 15 men gave to remain discreet about their sexual experiences was because of the smallness and interconnectedness of the gay community. Men said they were cautious discussing their sex lives because of the possibility that, in disclosing the details about a sexual partner, someone in the group might also know that person. Urth expressed this concern: "I could be talking to one guy about another guy and he's probably slept with him. Or knows a lot of people who have." This may lead to additional social consequences, such as making the sexual partner uncomfortable that that information had been made public or shifting the opinion of others in the group toward the discloser because they have a poor opinion of the sexual partner.

Some men mentioned that close gay friends may be former boyfriends or sexual partners, and they may not talk about recent sexual experiences because it may hurt these former partners to be reminded, as Urth put it, "I've moved on and moved on and moved

on." Men also discussed that they may be interested in dating or having sex with a

member of the group in the future, and they may monitor discussing their recent sexual

experiences for fear that it may damage their chances with potential partners. Collin

illustrated this:

> I'll give you an example of why things for the gay community can often be more
> complex [in terms of sharing information about one's sexual history]. If you take
> five straight couples and you sit them down for dinner, for every one man there
> are five potential connection partners in a romantic level at the table. If you do
> that with gay men, it just went from five to nine.

> Interviewees discussed a fine line that exists regarding what is appropriate and

what is inappropriate to say about men they found attractive while watching, or

"checking out" men with other gay men in a public space. Most men said this was

because more blatant comments about attraction--for example, discussing a specific body

part that is found especially attractive--may be interpreted as "looking for sex," as Jay put

it, and may make one appear promiscuous.

> In general, comments that are appropriate to make about another man's

appearance are vague. Steven discussed a friend that he felt frequently violated this

unspoken understanding, which led him to articulate for himself that a certain level of

detail in discussing one's attraction toward someone was uncomfortable and outside

norms. He said:

> I have a friend, and he's the only person I've heard articulate, to sort of an
> extreme, men's bodies. Other guys are, like, "Oh, he's really nice," or, like, "He
> has a pretty face." But he goes into the details, which I was really surprised about
> because I don't hear it much. When I hear people talking about checking other
> guys out, it's usually limited to their type and it's that context of like, "What are
> you into?" But this guy, I don't know anyone [else] getting down to the details,
> like circumference and length and build and things like that. Other guys are, like,
> "I like this person because he's my type." And type is so broad and safe. You
> don't have to get into some of those nitty, gritty details, which I feel like is kind
> of avoided. I don't know why, it's just too vulnerable. For us as gay men, we can

like guys and check them out and be like, "Oh, my God, that guy's really cute."
But we can't go into, "I really like this about him." Because then we're paying too
much attention.

The Managing Sex and Social Perception theme outlined the importance of

managing others' reactions to interviewees' sexual behavior. Interviewees said that they

had had sex at some point to not hurt someone's feelings. Participants also pointed out

the importance of not openly talking about one's sexual experiences and not explicitly

discussing being attracted to other men in order to maintain a reputation of being sexually

prudent.

Competition for Men

Participants indicated that having an attractive partner was very important in the

gay community. Jayke said, "It's a fierce competition. It has to do with getting the

guy…getting the guy to want you." This theme is divided into two subsections. First,

interviewees explained that most gay men find the same men to be attractive, leading to a

sense of competition between men for the most attractive potential partners. Having an

attractive partner gave men a sense of validation as being attractive as well, which gave

them proximity to social power. Second, gay men played games in order to be reassured

of a potential partner's interest.

The Importance of Having a Physically Attractive Partner

Participants expressed conflicting attitudes about attractive men. Despite the bias

they held that physically attractive men had character deficiencies, the gay men in this

study stated that the attractiveness of one's partner was very important. Samuel

illustrated this when he said, "We place such a huge emphasis on a partner's attractiveness because it gives us status." For the majority of participants, the most important audience from whom to gain strokes for having an attractive partner was the gay community. Interviewees described seeking out the most attractive men to date and the importance of finding the most attractive partner possible.

Partnered interviewees and men who had been in long-term relationships described wanting their partners to maintain an attractive appearance. Several men discussed the difficulty many gay men have participating in weight training or exercising with their boyfriends. These situations often led to arguments surrounding differing commitment levels to fitness, one partner enforcing his body image ideals on the other or feeling controlled or pushed to physically achieve a level of fitness he did not want in order to feel attractive to his partner.

Nearly all participants explained that having an attractive partner meant they would also be considered to be attractive. Participants perceived that, in gay culture, being appraised as attractive gave one social power. Ben stated that there is a "law that attractive people find people who are attractive." For gay men, having an attractive boyfriend may be the most important way to measure their own attractiveness, feel a sense of acceptance, and gain a positive sense of self-worth. Jayke said:

> Having a hot boyfriend in the gay community also means you're hot yourself. The attractive men in the gay community would only settle for someone who at least matches that sense of outward appeal. In a way they're reflecting back what they're worth.

Play Games

Twelve of the interviewees agreed that, in pursuing another man, the man who appears less interested had more power in the exchange. Thus, these men "played games" to win the sexual or romantic interest of other men, ot to be perceived as less interested in a relationship. This typically involved passively seeking assurance of another man's interest by pulling away, or acting disinterested, in order to be actively pursued and in a position of power. Urth explained playing games as "trying to lure people in a way that isn't very direct." This was because the one pursuing was seen as being more susceptible to rejection and hurt. Jayke said, "Being assertive and being the most interested means you're the more vulnerable or the more exposed. You have put your ass on the line in a way, and you have more to lose." Interviewees said these strategies to put someone else in the position of being more assertive are used both with men for whom they had authentic romantic interest and from whom they wanted temporary affection for a sexual encounter.

Interviewees attributed game playing to a sense that one has lost power or is not in control. Because of his need to be desired and his lack of confidence that he is equally desired by the man he is pursuing, a man may "play a game" in order to discover the level of interest of a potential partner. But playing games may also clarify roles in an evolving power dynamic between two men for whom roles of pursuer and pursued are not defined beforehand. Urth explained,

> In straight society, sex appeal and the ability to hold some sort of mystery is the girl's realm, and the guy's realm is looking at women. But in the gay world, you play both. You're the seeker and you're also the one sought out, and you have to pick your role, which one you're going to be. And I've been different with different people.

In this case, a man may play a game or passively pull back in order to establish his role as someone who is sought out or in order to give and take power in an evolving development of interest.

In summary, Competition for Attractive Men detailed the status accompanied by having an attractive partner, especially within the gay community. This is at least in part because having an attractive partner reflected positively on one's own attractiveness. Gay men may also play games in order to be reassured of the interest of an attractive man.

Sex and Emotion

The Sex and Emotion theme followed the split between the emotional and the physical intimacy of relationships. This theme was subdivided into four sections. First, participants described their concerns about becoming emotionally vulnerable and the threat of emotional exposure. Because of this threat, they often used sex in place of verbal and/or emotional expression. Second, participants explained they often had sex in order to cope with difficult emotions. Third, interviewees often used sex as a way to build trust with a partner and eventually "open up" emotionally. Finally, interviewees explained how these behaviors and attitudes about sex led to difficulties with fidelity in relationships.

Sexual Connection Instead of Emotional Connection

Ned said, "Gay men have the ability to divorce emotion and sex." This certainly proved true for men in the study, eighteen of whom described intimacy as dichotomized into an emotional and a physical connection. The two types of connection could be

combined in some sexual encounters (such as with a partner) or remain separate (for example, having only a physical connection in nonrelational sex). One also might be substituted for the other, in the case of men having sex in order to avoid emotional connection.

For these 18 men, emotional intimacy was seen as being something that was risky or would put someone in a vulnerable position. As Joe said, "You have to be careful. People can take advantage of that if you express or you open up too much." Rather than take risks associated with emotional intimacy (i.e., vulnerability or engulfment), some interviewees explained that physical intimacy was less "risky" in terms of being vulnerable to possible emotional hurt. Six of the eight partnered men explained they frequently had sex rather than discussing emotions with their partner. Ten of the twelve single men disclosed that, at some point, they had had nonrelational sex in order to feel an emotional connection while avoiding the vulnerability believed to underlie verbal self-disclosure. Jay articulated this role of sexual connection to bridge this gap:

> Gay men use sex as a way to connect. On some level it's not because they're gay, it's just a masculine trait. You're taught not to share your emotions. But then it comes out when you're body to body and I think then you share. Everything kind of comes out when you're doing that. It's a way of showing emotion without actually saying things.

Seven men expressed that, for them, sex is rarely, if ever, emotional, both with their partner and in nonrelational sexual experiences. These men all said, at some point during the interview, "Sex is just sex"; and they could not remember a time when they felt they had had sex that was also emotionally connected. Some attributed this to their character or their family culture. For some of these men, having frequent sex with a friend (or "friends with benefits") was as close to an emotional or romantic relationship

as they were willing to experience. These men expressed a low interest in activities that

were not related to penetration (e.g., kissing, holding, touching, etc.). Jess related:

> I can disconnect sex and emotion very easily. I think that it's something that you're born with. I always have been able to. I don't understand how people connect, to be perfectly honest. For my partner, it's very different. He's so emotional about the whole thing. Good sex for him is kissing and cuddling and all of that kind of stuff. Emotion and sex go hand in hand, and so that's been hard in our relationship because we deal with that [sex and emotion] so differently. And I see that with our friends, too. They're usually one or the other and it makes it kind of difficult [in their relationship].

Eight interviewees said they had very little, if any, experience with overt

emotional talk with a romantic or sexual partner for fear of being left or misunderstood,

having their love be unreciprocated, or being somehow exposed to vulnerability. These

men said they had difficulty when they felt an expectation from another man to

emotionally disclose or said they would avoid potential partners who would expect them

to talk about their emotions. Because of their avoidance of emotional connection, the

physical connection became their only source of intimacy. Jay said,

> When you're sharing emotions with someone, you think about it so much that it stresses you out. It's easier to have the sex than to talk about it. Being too open with your emotions and sharing too much can be harmful. It's easier to just jump in the sack and do that instead… I guess I haven't ever seen deep emotion expressed between gay men. I'm not going to open up my heart. I can't say I've ever experienced or seen emotional sharing.

Additionally, six of these men said that they believed gay men in general were

unwilling to be emotionally open because of masculinity socialization. These men stated

that, because men are taught not to share emotion and to be hypersexual, sexual

connections were the only outlet left for them to feel emotional intimacy. Bentley said:

> Two guys are never able to provide that emotional connection with one another. There is only so much that gay guys are willing to share, or get close to one another. That's not how guys are raised, so it's not going to be natural. I'm not

comfortable talking about myself, and I tend to either shut off or I start to joke around.

Sex as a Means of Coping

Six interviewees said that they had sex in order to cope with difficult emotions they faced or as a distraction from turmoil in their personal life. They described having sex to feel comforted, rather than talking about intimate aspects of their own emotional life or their difficult feelings. Men feared that being emotionally open would lead to being perceived by others as "clingy," "needy," "girly," "pathetic," or "dependent." In order to find comfort in the midst of turmoil, many men expressed that sex becomes an escape from negative emotion. Jay explained, "I've had sex to fill an emotional void. And I'm just getting to the point in life when I'm wising up and realizing why I was doing that."

For these men, sex was a means to soothe their lack of self-worth or loneliness. They described the sexual interest expressed by someone else as a form of approval and acceptance that gave them a temporary sense of self-assurance. These men may engage in sex, as Mark put it, to find "a sense of their own self-esteem through sexual interaction. They're trying to find a way to feel good about who they are." Several of these interviewees suggested that sex calmed an existential anxiety that had to do with loneliness and being alone that may be rooted in growing-up experiences feeling very alone and without support. This anxiety about being alone may be triggered by everyday experiences of feeling lonely or anxious. They explained that having intense physical intimacy might give gay men contact with another man who is attracted to men and a temporary assurance that they are not alone.

Sex First, Emotional Connection Later

Thirteen interviewees pointed out that gay men often had sex on the first or second date as a way of getting to know one another and to see if the physical connection would lead to an emotional connection. Bentley said, "Within the gay world, there's always sex first and get to know you later, versus getting to know one another first, actually going out on dates, before sex." For these men, meeting someone new evoked a great sexual attraction that often dissipated quickly after having sex for the first time and getting to know someone on an emotional level. This often led to very brief relationships with men, with a sexual encounter as a primary context in which two men became acquainted.

Several reasons were given for this expedition of sexual interaction. First, it was necessary to have sex very soon after meeting someone in order to maintain his interest and to be considered a potential romantic partner. Second, others explained that having sex rather than discussing emotion hid one's interest in emotional connection and avoided vulnerability. Third, having sex created an immediate sense of intimacy, even among men who did not know each other well, giving them a sense of closeness and connection. However, the most-often mentioned reason for having sex during the initial stages of dating was that sex was a symbolic interaction through which a couple developed enough trust to risk emotional disclosure and the developmental of an emotional connection. Matt said, "I think there's a level of trust built with the sexual encounters; it makes it easier to speak with someone because you have seen them a few times." Although sex did not

indicate any future investment in a relationship, it was a means to getting to know a potential partner. Although there were not necessarily emotions verbally expressed during sex, a positive sexual encounter that would lead to trust might include, as Ben described, "feeling somebody's present and that they are appreciating what is going on in that moment. It doesn't have to be verbally articulated. It could be expressed by squeezing someone tighter or pausing in the middle of sex."

Most online dating sites for gay men were seen as cruising sites, encouraging a nonrelational sexual experience as the first date. Ben, who was coupled, explained how dating works for a single friend of his:

> His dates are sexual to begin with, people who he's met in some sexual context, whether it's a bar or a website, and they make a plan to get together, but he knows that it's going to be about sex. But in the course of sex he gets to know them. And then some of them he will have another date with.

Fourteen interviewees mentioned that, on at least one occasion, they had met a man on a website, had sex within the first three encounters, and then had subsequent dates to see if they were interested in a long-term, romantic relationship.

Interviewees explained that having sex with someone they dated did not indicate they were interested in developing a long-term, committed relationship. In contrast, emotional disclosure, which often followed sex, did indicate an investment in a future relationship. After men had sex, followed by subsequent dates, discussions about emotion began to take place. These discussions about their introspections and emotions were most often interpreted as "falling in love." Because emotional connection was the greatest indication of emotional investment and was rarely engaged in, participants' levels of emotional disclosure were often discussed as carefully monitored and not casually given; they explained that it took time to develop the trust necessary to "open up" about their

feelings. Interviewees moderated their emotional disclosure in order to not open themselves up to too much vulnerability before feeling a sense of commitment from the other man.

Extra-relational Sex

When asked what typically ended a relationship between men, 14 of the interviewees pointed out that extra-relational sexual activity and infidelity was a major contributing factor to the reasons behind the termination of gay relationships. Dave said, "The chase is part of the fun, and once men are in a relationship, the male nature, we want to chase again." These interviewees mentioned that masculinity norms emphasizing frequent sex as validating to one's sense of manhood conflicted with having one long-term relationship. Once committed, it was difficult for many gay men to break the belief that sex would allow them to feel validated as masculine. Frequent sex was also seen by some as a means to compensate for the masculinity norm of heterosexual attraction. Interviewees pointed out that it is easy to become "addicted" to sexual validation, and that can make fidelity in a relationship very difficult.

Additional reasons given for why men continued to have sex after committing to be monogamous included the desire for excitement or to feel like there were other romantic or sexual possibilities. Eight men also pointed out that gay men often "cheat" to cope with the difficult emotions they faced in their relationship or because they were not authentically, emotionally connected to their partner. In this case, gay men may have an affair with someone else, not because they may actually be compatible with the man with whom they are having the affair, but as a symptom of the unhappy relationship.

Several interviewees, however, pointed out that relationships did not always end following infidelity. Five men discussed that once they entered into a monogamous relationship with their partner, either they or their partner were unable to remain faithful, which led to the establishment of an open relationship. Sex outside of the relationship was seen as acceptable as long as the sex remained "recreational" and nothing more. If, however, a man was seeking out sexual experiences as a way to compensate for the lack of emotional connection in his relationship, then a man should examine the overall health of his relationship. Ned said,

> If one of the partners in a gay male relationship goes out, just has some random hook up, there's nothing emotional about it. It's a quick, sexual thing, and boom, it's over. And then you go home to your partner. It's not too much further off than if you found some gay porn and jerked off. Emotionally there's nothing different between doing that and some random hook up with somebody. If emotion is going into that mix, then there is obviously some emotional component of the relationship that is lacking. If you're looking for that emotional connection, then you may be seeking it out because you're not finding that in your current relationship. You should be able to work through those things and find out if it's fixable or not fixable. I think those dynamics are available to gay men.

Thus, recreational sex did not always end a relationship. The "random hook up" was not necessarily seen as threatening, because it was a physical, rather than an emotional, connection. The emotional connection was seen as the heart of the relationship, rather than the physical, sexual connection. Because love was firmly connected to emotional disclosure, it was seeking out an emotional connection through sex that led to a relationship concluding.

Twelve interviewees did not endorse the idea of an open relationship and said that they were either in a monogamous relationship or would establish a monogamous partnership when they entered into a relationship. These 12 men also frequently mentioned they regretted the general attitude in gay culture that allowed for open

relationships. Mark disclosed, "I think the sad piece is that the gay culture in general has allowed for men to almost have a disclaimer of, 'It's ok not to be monogamous.'"

The Sex and Emotion topic focused primarily on men's avoidance of emotional expression and the strategies learned to meet needs for emotional intimacy. Men often used sex in order to cope with difficult feelings or a sense of loneliness. Coupled gay men also described that, for them, having sex outside the relationship was recreation and not linked to an emotional connection.

<div align="center">Commitment and Work</div>

The Commitment and Work theme followed eight men's descriptions of what made relationships long lasting and satisfying. The title of this theme came from a phrase used over and over by these men to describe the most critical elements of an enduring relationship: commitment and work. This theme was divided into three subsections. First, interviewees described a commitment to their relationship, of simply staying together despite difficulty and of putting forth continual effort into resolving challenges. Second, making relationships function well involved continual work on one's personal character development. Third, a high degree of relationship satisfaction was associated with leaving behind certain elements of gay culture.

The most often mentioned element of work was learning how to communicate honestly. William discussed that this coupling of commitment and effort is key to successful relationships:

> Too many people give up too early. They don't know how to just keep on pushing through and working at it. Because it's work. We had a lot of struggles. We're polar opposites, and that's been a challenge. But we've always been there for each other. One of the things that the gay community really needs to develop is a sense

of [couples] sticking together. I think a lot of people are really afraid of commitment. I don't even think they realize what commitment is. It's not about pressure or stress. It's about support and love.

Interviewees described the misperception that when you are with the "right" partner, the relationship would be effortless. However, many had learned that, even in good relationships, the level of work exceeded their expectations. Steve said:

> None of us are really prepared to go into a relationship where we have to work; and we're always surprised by this idea, like, "Oh, yeah, I actually have to work in my relationship. I'm not just going to click with this person and it's going to be perfect." I see a lot of people who are surprised at the need to have to work at a relationship.

One of the most profound realizations the men made was that, following the establishment of a definite commitment to maintain the relationship, there followed an acceptance of one another's differences. Comments about acceptance of differences included understanding that, because partners may have different viewpoints, this did not affect the level of commitment and love they shared. Interviewees described coming to the understanding that dissimilarities in their personalities enriched their relationships. Dave recounted the moment he reached this understanding:

> We had been kind of arguing, and we'd been fighting. And, all of a sudden, the realization came that I don't want him to be the same; and it's ok if we see life completely different and that we challenge each other. All of a sudden it clicked in my mind that this is the way that it's supposed to be. And this is perfect, and this is great. It was this incredible feeling of peace. I learned that it was ok to stop making him me.

Ben echoed this theme that once a level of commitment had been firmly established, he and his partner were able to accept their differences:

> There are still things that drive you crazy. But the things that drive you crazy, you have perspective on it. In past relationships, if something would drive me crazy, everything they did, I would think, "Is this the time that I decide to leave?" And the difference is, now, when those times come up, I can say, "Oh, this sucks…right now."

Interviewees pointed out that masculinity socialization normalized men into a dominant role and that they were unaccustomed to accommodating another person's needs and desires in day-to-day life. This came from being raised to believe that they would be the accommodated partner and that they would not have to compromise or negotiate with a partner. Jess said, "Men are used to running their own lives, doing their own thing; then, all of a sudden, they have to work together, and I think that's hard for men."

Work on Self

Jess explained, "I think the work part of the relationship has to do with dealing with your own emotions, to be perfectly honest." This element of the Work on the Relationship theme involved a commitment to self-improvement. This included increased awareness of their own emotional experience, restraining their anger, and learning to compromise and negotiate. A significant part of the progress they could make toward their relationship was an element of self-acceptance. Men described allowing themselves to accept the care of their partner and allowing themselves to be vulnerable. As they described being more comfortable with their own identities and emotions, they also described being able to be more accepting of their partners and in giving them more care.

Leaving Behind Parts of Gay Culture

Interviewees described the necessity of leaving behind certain elements of gay culture that they found to be detrimental to the sustained health of their relationship. These elements included frequently going out to bars, alcohol consumption, and spending

a great deal of time with other gay men. Dave pointed out, "You have to be careful not to put yourself in situations where you're going to be tempted."

The Commitment and Work theme sums the experiences men recounted making their relationships endure despite difficulty. It honors the significant effort men put into their relationships, as well as their commitment to the process of deepening and strengthening their relationships. Many men in this study attributed the success of their relationships to leaving behind certain behavior associated with participating in gay culture.

The Process of Gay Sexual Self-schema Transition

All gay participants explained a process through which sexual behavior and attitudes shifted through time. Because participants described their sexual self-schemas as a changing concept, affected by experience and insight, a single theme did not seem appropriate to document these changes in desires and behavior. Instead, these experiences, influences, and developmental steps were positioned into a conceptual framework detailing this process.

Participants described a process that included, first, the experiences that marked distinct moments of change in their sexual self-schema. This included an initial period of frequent, nonrelational sexual partners; the significance of one's first relationship; reconciling one's own past and personal difficulties in order to make a relationship more stable; and how the importance placed on appearance changes over the course of the lifespan. Second, cultural changes, including greater acceptance of gay lifestyles in mainstream American life and an increased emphasis on muscularity within gay culture,

had direct effects on how gay participants made meaning of their experiences and shifted the structure of their sexual self-schemas. Finally, developmental outcomes resulted from these experiences and cultural influences. These included increasing importance of finding someone in a similar developmental phase, taking developmental steps for one's partner, and decreased importance placed on the appearance of one's partner.

Experiential Factors

Period of Promiscuity. All participants explained that, when a gay man begins to openly acknowledge his sexual orientation, he might go through a period of sexual promiscuity. This period was not associated with chronological age, but with the period of time after coming out, regardless of whether they were in their teens, 20s, or after coming out as gay in their 40s or 50s. As Justin explained, "It's just the hook up phase. But you grow out of it; it's a phase that everyone goes through. Because [you have been] so sexually repressed." A high frequency of sex with many partners was described as being an indication that a gay man was in the beginning stages of his gay identity development. Justin further articulated that you might date and have sex frequently "if you're a new gay and just trying to figure things out…and what kinds of guys you like to date." This stage was seen as a necessary step to pass through or, as Urth explained, to "get out of your system," in order to eventually go on to have healthy, fulfilling relationships. It also may carry with it an understanding that sex may be emotionally disconnected or not carry with it a significant investment in the evolution of a long-term relationship.

During this period, gay men may have many short-term relationships or may have their first experience of falling in love. Dating experience may lead to discovering the range of potential partners or to determine one's preferences in a partner, but also to develop a sense of one's own natural pull toward certain roles in the give and take of a relationship. Because of the lack of social rules surrounding gay relationships, in terms of a traditional binary separation of role expectations, gay men may determine through dating experiences the roles and responsibilities they enjoy in a relationship.

Developmental realizations about sex included learning the technicalities of one's own and others' bodies; discovering the sexual activities one enjoys through experimentation; and an understanding that sex is not always, as Collin put it, "mad, passionate, knocking over lamps and tables every single time." Men also discussed how they had arrived at, through age and experience, a deeper understanding of the emotional element of sex. This was accomplished by going through a period of promiscuous sexual behavior, then determining that sex with emotional connection is satisfying and desirable. Jayke narrated:

> Most of my friends have had that life experience and they know what sex is all about. You learn what it can be and then what it also can't be. It has its time and its place, but it's so fleeting. And then you see what it can be, which is still those moments, but also with lots of other emotion, connection.

The milestone most frequently mentioned that signaled that the period of promiscuity had ended was a desire to be in a committed relationship. Many men mentioned that, after they had had a wide range of sexual experiences, they tired of being single. Steven said, "I went out, there are only so many gay clubs you can go to, and then there's sort of nothing." Interviewees reported that, after a certain period of time dating many different men, they were no longer afraid of forming a commitment with another

man and wanted to find someone with whom to share a significant romantic connection. Although following this period of promiscuity, their first relationships ended and men returned to dating and being single, participants reported that they did not return to the same phase of confusion and excitement about the possibilities of dating and having sex in the same way.

The First Relationship. Twelve of the gay men discussed the significance of their first relationship as a pivotal learning experience. Men also joked about the common understanding that the first relationship never works out. Stories of men's first relationships included experiences with emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, major discoveries in appropriate versus inappropriate relationship behavior, and figuring out what a man wanted in a potential partner. Men described their first relationship as a period of significant personal growth. William said:

> There were some things I went through with my first [boyfriend]. Probably just realized that some of the things that I was doing were really self-defeating and detrimental and I really was hurting somebody. Just making the transition to I need to take into consideration some other people. I just wanted to be happy and I did things that made me happy without taking into consideration somebody else. It was kind of a growing up period.

The first relationship also included realizing how developmental milestones affect the relationship, such as when one partner is out to his friends and family and the other is closeted. This may have led to the breakup, if one of the partner was ready to move on to a relationship with someone who was more settled into a gay identity, whereas the other was not yet ready to come out. Joe recounted his experience with his first boyfriend:

> The bad part of that relationship was that he didn't recognize it as a relationship. He just wanted to call me his best buddy, but best buddies don't sleep together almost every night. So I felt like I was giving too much and the other person wasn't really into it. He wasn't totally out at the time and he didn't want people to find out he was gay.

In some cases, gay men mentioned that their first boyfriend remained a friend over time because of the significant developmental experiences they shared together.

Negotiating Open Relationships. Of the 8 men who were married or in committed, long-term relationships, 6 were in a relationship that was currently open, or had been open at some point. All coupled interviewees mentioned that one of the most difficult developmental decisions in terms of romantic relationships and sexuality for gay men was the decision to have an open relationship. This was attributed to less emphasis placed on monogamous coupling in gay culture, lack of legal marriage rights, different social norms surrounding long-term relationships, and the importance of sex. The 6 men who had open relationships shared that, at a point in their relationship, they had had a candid dialogue about establishing an open relationship, as well as the rules that would surround this agreement. Couples established boundaries that included, for example, that one can have sex with someone outside the relationship only while traveling or in the context of a threesome with both partners present, that extra-relationship sex can only include certain sexual activities, that it cannot occur in the shared living space, or that it cannot occur more than once with the same partner.

The transition to an open relationship was often described as a rocky one. This was either because one partner wanted the relationship to open up more than the other, because the initiation into an open relationship was a result of infidelity, because the relationship had become sexually stagnant, or because the decision was part of an effort to try to keep the relationship from failing. Men in open relationships emphasized the importance of honest communication, respecting boundaries, and of being able to trust their partners. Men in open relationships also said that, although at one time they may

have frequently had sexual partners outside the relationship, with time, although it was

still allowed within the relationship, having extrarelational sex was rare. Ned explained

how his relationship transitioned from exclusive to open:

> There's this monogamous, heterosexual relationship that was my relationship
> model. For the first probably five or six years, that really was controlling; and I
> really wasn't willing to break out of that. But my partner challenged me and
> pulled me along and made me a little more realistic about that kind of thing. There
> was a point where my partner had sex outside of the relationship. And we hadn't
> really discussed whether that was permissible or not. And that really rocked my
> world a little bit and was difficult for me. He was, like, "It's no big deal; it's just
> recreational." And so that was an evolution in our relationship. And we've talked
> through those things and we've gotten through them, and they haven't been
> relationship-ending; because, in the end, we both are honestly committed to each
> other. And if something like that happens, I'm coming home. I'm always back
> here. And if you had asked me that two years into the relationship, I would have
> been, like, "Holy crap. It's done. You do that to me and it's over." But as we've
> gotten older, and I think we've gotten more secure in our relationship, we are very
> good about communicating, and I think those were phases, in a way. It's been a
> long, long time since we've fooled around with anybody else recreationally. And
> it's been a very long time since the instances where my partner fooled around by
> himself. And at this point, it absolutely could happen again, but we both know
> what the ground rules are. We've become very secure in where we are with that
> and if it happens, it happens, but it's certainly not going to be, "Ok, screw you,
> then. It's over."

Mediating Cultural Influences

Social Acceptance of Homosexuality. Eleven men discussed how feeling

acceptance of their gay orientation identity from social and cultural sources helped them

also feel greater acceptance of themselves as time passed. For example, the eventual

acceptance of their sexuality by family members who were not initially accepting was

mentioned as playing a role in this transition. For some men, especially men of color, this

resolution may be affected by cultural pressures, such as the pressure to marry, to not

discount the solidarity of the family, and religious concerns.

Some older interviewees pointed out that developmental steps might also be facilitated by the passage of time and the greater acceptance of homosexuality by mainstream culture. For example, William described, "When I was coming out, the places you met people were bathrooms, gym locker rooms, saunas, steam rooms, and parks. People don't realize how different it is now. I just gave my boyfriend a kiss in a fast food joint. And I wouldn't have dared do that 20, 30 years ago." Older men mentioned the transition they have seen in how gay men meet other men and find a gay community. For example, Collin explained that, in the '70s and '80s, gay men met one another in certain covert gay spaces (such as saunas and parks), then in overtly gay spaces in the '80s and '90s, such as bars and clubs, and now the internet and even in "straight clubs," as gay men are less marginalized from mainstream culture. Interviewees expressed that being able to meet potential partners in more traditional ways and to be open with others about their sexuality and relationships allows gay men to come out earlier in life and have more stable relationships.

Increased Cultural Emphasis on Muscularity. Participants explained that the importance of muscularity seemed to be increasing over time, which they attributed to increased media focus on muscularity and the use of men's bodies in advertising. For example, Collin explained that the increased popularity of the Abercrombie and Fitch catalog in the late 1990s had brought about a lasting augmentation in gay men's concerns about appearance.

Developmental Outcomes

Increasing Importance of Finding Someone Developmentally Similar. Gay men underlined the importance of finding a romantic partner who is similar to them, not necessarily in chronological age, but in terms of their developmental process as gay men. Earlier on in one's dating experiences, being in the same developmental stage as a potential partner may be less important. Early on there may be less awareness of the varieties of potential partners; an emphasis on sex; or simply a strong, overarching desire to simply be in a relationship. But with time and consideration of what would make a long-term, healthy relationship, eight of the gay men interviewed mentioned looking for men who had gone through important milestones and reconciling gay identity developmental markers. These milestones included coming out, resolving religious issues, having had prior relationship experiences, finding peace with family relationships, discovering the characteristics one wanted in a potential partner, and going through a period of promiscuity. Jayke stated:

> I went on a date on Saturday. We had dinner, and the whole time we were talking about his relationship with his parents, his relationship with God, is he ok with who he is, when did he come out. I'm thinking about where they are in like, their development.

The fact that a potential partner was developmentally behind was often cited as a reason for the relationship not working out. This was either because one partner did not want to wait for the other to resolve developmental issues or because of the uncertainty of how a man would evolve due to experience. For example, after having certain experiences, especially early on, a gay man may establish that he is not interested in committed relationships, that he does or does not want an open relationship, that he has a

rigid attraction to only one "type" of man, or that he is not interested in eventually having a family.

Taking Developmental Steps for a Partner. All interviewees pointed out that finding and maintaining a healthy romantic relationship necessitated moving through developmental issues. This included having confidence in oneself, being emotionally stable, and confronting difficult personal problems. Gay men felt they needed to confront the mental health issues that often accompany growing up gay, because these issues can interfere with the relationship. Some of these difficult remnants of growing up gay included secretiveness, selfishness, fear of rejection, lack of self-confidence, and the fear of being alone. Steven gave an example of how men may get into relationships not because the relationship is a healthy one or has long-term potential, but to escape a sense of loneliness from childhood:

> There's an incredible drive to get with another person. We spent a lot of time [growing up] alone. We were very, very lonely. We knew we were attracted to men and we couldn't do anything about it. We went through high school…we just got really quiet, or we tried to disappear. And in a way, we're trying not to feel alone again; and so there's this kind of mad drive to get with another person.

In some cases, beginning a romantic relationship and having a boyfriend caused men to take developmental steps, such as coming out to their families or friends. Without the presence of a significant romantic relationship, some men reasoned, there was no need to come out to friends or loved ones because there would be no difference in their day-to-day interactions. Brett explained, "If this relationship was going to work and I was going to have a committed relationship, I finally had to come out to my family and friends; because I couldn't hide this person from them and lie about who he is." Not only did these relationships provide the impetus necessary to take these steps, but the presence

of a romantic partner also gave gay interviewees the social support necessary to take the necessary risks to become open about their gay identity.

Decreased Importance of Appearance. Despite a cultural emphasis on muscularity, experience appeared to diminish the importance of one's appearance. For example, half of the interviewees recounted that, within the first few years after coming out, physical attractiveness was a much more important aspect of a potential partner than it became as they got older or had increased experiences with dating and relationships. Bentley said, "When I was younger, I looked for a certain type of guy…the physical aspect of things…I've realized that I actually like someone with a personality versus the looks if I had to choose one over the other." Life experiences, such as finding a long-term, committed partner, or an increased sense of social acceptance, may be accompanied by a decrease in the importance placed on physical attractiveness and less competition with other men for attention. The five men who described this diminished emphasis on appearance also said they felt less disappointment when someone did not reciprocate romantic interest. Dave clarified, "When I was younger I used to just get crushed when somebody didn't like me. And now I realize that there are so many other things that go into it. You just don't know what they're looking for, so you can't get crushed by that. Maybe it has nothing to do with you."

The Process of Gay Sexual Self-schema Transition summed how gay men's sexual self-schemas transitioned over time. This included experimentation with sex and relationships, how one's own developmental process impacted relationships, the milestone of deciding whether to have an open relationship, and the shifting importance

of appearance in gay men's lives. Developmental issues led to a deeper understanding of sexual self-schemas as a function of lifespan.

Summary of Themes and Process

This section discussed the themes that emerged from a grounded theory analysis of the 20 interviews with gay men. The themes that emerged included (1) Internalized Homonegativity, (2) Pornography and Sexual Orientation Identity, (3) Physically Attractive Men, (4) Managing Sex and Social Perception, (5) Competition for Attractive Men, (6) Sex and Emotion, and (7) Commitment and Work. The Process of Gay Sexual Self-schema was also detailed by participants. The next section describes the themes of sexual self-schemas shared by the bisexual male participants.

Bisexual Participants

Nine themes of sexual self-schemas were disclosed by the bisexual participants in this study. These themes emerged from categories developed through the data analysis and, as closely as possible, match the language and the underlying meanings of themes presented by the participants in the study. As they were analyzed, the strategies fell into the following topics: (1) Disproportionate Attraction, (2) Overt Sexualizing of Women's Bodies, (3) Covert Sexualizing of Men's Bodies, (4) Physical Appearance Is Important to Men Who Are Attracted to Men, (5) The Importance of Emotional Connection, (6) Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men, (7) Anxieties About Long-Term Relationships, (8) Belief That Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality, (9) Finding the "Right Person."

In addition to these nine themes, data analysis also captured a process of transition in participants' sexual self-schemas over time. As interviewees had dating and sexual experiences and developed awareness of bisexual attraction, they described change in the way their perceived themselves, as well as relationships. Following description of themes, The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction is outlined. This process is a conceptual framework that describes how (1) experiences and (2) awareness of one's attractions to men and women affect the (3) identity development stages and transitions of bisexual men's sexual self-schemas.

As with the gay participants, cultural context played an important role in the life experience and masculinity socialization of the bisexual participants. Within these themes, I will discuss the role of minority status in conceptualizing variations among participants. Although differences may have occurred within each of the topics, it appeared that the largest discrepancies occurred within the theme Disproportionate Attraction, Anxieties About Long-term Relationships, and Belief that Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality.

Themes:

1. Disproportionate Attraction
2. Overt Sexualizing of Women's Bodies
3. Covert Sexualizing of Men's Bodies
4. Physical Appearance Is Important to Men Who Are Attracted to Men
5. The Importance of Emotional Connection
6. Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men
7. Anxieties About Long-Term Relationships
8. Belief That Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality
9. Finding the "Right Person"

Process:

1. The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction

Disproportionate Attraction

Ricky said, "I see bisexuality as being attracted to both men and women, but I do think there is more attraction to one sex. I don't think it's 50-50." Nearly all participants described a realization that, although they were attracted to both sexes, they had greater attraction to one sex or the other. Of those interviewed, 2 identified as being more attracted to women, 13 participants were more attracted to men, and 5 said they felt equal attraction to men and women. Below are described, first, the elements of this sexual self-schema that characterized sexual and emotional attraction that was more focused on men; second, those elements characteristic of those interviewees whose attraction was more focused on women; and finally, those who felt they experienced equal, dual attraction.

More Attracted to Men

Thirteen participants described themselves as more attracted, both sexually and romantically, to men. Interviewees who were more attracted to men more frequently reported being attracted to a wide range of sexual activities with men that allowed for a sense of collaboration and power-sharing. For example, interviewees stated that they did not prioritize anal intercourse, but more frequently chose other sexual activities, such as mutual masturbation or oral sex. Mark stated, "I like a give and take, sexually. It can't be just one-sided. I'm not here to dominate you; we're equals." They expressed a sense that at times gay men prioritized anal sex in a way that made them uncomfortable and that they felt diminished sexual creativity and emotional closeness.

Most interviewees stated that they were attracted to men who adhered to traditional masculine norms in behavior and appearance rather than men who

demonstrated more traditional feminine gender traits. When asked to describe "masculine" traits, interviewees mentioned men who had deep voices and muscular bodies, and who did not move their hands or bodies when speaking or move their hips markedly when walking. Nate said, "I feel like there's a lot of….hypermasculinity to a certain extent. It's fascinating to see what people list as what their desires are online: 'I will only be with men who act like A, B, C.' And it's never, 'I'm seeking effeminate men.'

Bisexual men who were more attracted to men described themselves as being attracted to men of a wide range of racial/ethnic backgrounds (this is described in further detail below, in the Attraction is Based on the Individual theme). However, bisexual men of color explained they had difficulty finding gay men to date because they found most gay men only found White men attractive. They found this attraction bias in both White men and other men of color. In some cases, they felt they were often pursued sexually by White men out of a sense of curiosity that had to do with their racial background. For example, Everett explained that he felt White men found him attractive because he was completely foreign to them. Kenny articulated it this way,

> Most of the attention that I get is because people are like, "Oh, he's Black." And you can tell when someone likes you just because you're Black. They tell you, "Oh, I've never been with a Black guy before." They just look at my body. You can tell the genuine ones and those that just like you because they just want to say, "I've been with a Black guy."

When interviewees with predominant attractions to men were asked what they found most attractive about a man, their answers did not include specific body parts, but general characteristics, including, "fit," "well put together," "proportional," and "in shape." However, interviewees explained that, in order to be attracted to a woman, she

must possess specific physical features that they found especially attractive. For example, when asked what physical features he found most attractive, Nate explained, "With women, it's very specific—more specific than with men: boobs, and asses, and legs, or hips on a woman. As far as men go, height and weight proportionate is the only thing I look for." Dustin said, "The most attractive part of a woman is her thighs, her legs, and her breasts. In a man, I'm really just into masculinity." Percy said, "A man doesn't have to be thin or chubby or be a certain body type [in order for me to find him attractive]. For a woman, it's the thighs, it's also the abdominal section."

Nine interviewees who were more attracted to men reported they primarily watched pornography featuring only men (3 interviewees preferred pornography with male and female actors). These interviewees mentioned they preferred gay pornography because heterosexual pornography did not typically focus equal attention on the male actor, and male actors in heterosexual pornography were seen as less attractive. These interviewees also mentioned that they looked at gay pornography more frequently than heterosexual pornography because they felt pornography in general was degrading to the female actors filmed. Everett said, "I have issues with heterosexual pornography because I totally see the gender inequity and it's stupid." Mark stated, "I don't love straight porn because I'm very respectful of women, and the way that women are treated in straight porn, I don't appreciate most of the time…It's all about the man doing whatever he's doing to the woman." Interviewees reported that their experience watching gay pornography was more enjoyable because they imagined the actors actually enjoyed the experience, were focused on their own pleasure, and were not exploited.

More Attracted to Women

Two interviewees were more attracted, sexually and romantically, to women. They explained they were more physically than emotionally attracted to men, and were drawn to men only if they possessed an extraordinary physical feature to which they were especially attracted. For example, Kenny stated, "I would prefer to have sex with a woman. But if a man has a very nice body, I like him." Howard said, "I'm pickier about men's bodies. He would have to be just as good as what I like in porn. I like really lean, young looking. For women, she's got to have a pretty face, but that's not a deal breaker." These men stated that they felt more confident in their ability to sexually please women than other men, which they attributed to fewer sexual episodes with men.

Equally Attracted to Both

Five interviewees stated that they were equally attracted sexually and romantically to both sexes. These interviewees all stated that having a sexual experience with both a man and a woman at the same time was a fantasy of theirs or was something they had done in the past. These interviewees reported they were equally general or specific about the body parts they found attractive in men and women. When Jack was asked, for example, what he found most attractive about men and women, he gave specific answers about each, "I find myself being attracted to girls' legs, their ass, their hips. On guys, it's upper body, arms, from the waist up." However, Ace was general about both men and women, "Both, just fit bodies. Nothing too specific, but I like them to be fit." Likewise, Spencer stated, "For a woman, there's a lot of variation I find attractive. And there could be with guys, too."

The disproportionate attraction theme described the fact that, although all interviewees stated they were attracted to both men and women, 15 had a greater attraction to either men or women. These men were only attracted to the nondominant attracted sex if an individual possessed a physical characteristic they found particularly desirable. Of the interviewees, only 5 participants reported equal emotional and physical attraction to both men and women.

Overt Sexualizing of Women's Bodies

Fourteen bisexual interviewees remarked that they "looked at," "watched," "fantasied about," and "checked out" women's bodies. They reported looking at women's bodies alone and also discussing their observations and fantasies about women with peers. Remarks about girl watching indicated that participants often focused on a woman's physical attractiveness and the female body as an instrument of sexual pleasure. With heterosexual peers, talking about women's bodies bolstered friendships. Jamal, for example, when asked about girl watching with friends, said, "With my straight friends… it's that camaraderie thing." With gay peers, interviewees also said they made occasional observations about women's bodies; however, because gay men did not share their attractions, these kinds of comments were not often engaged. For example, when asked if he talked about women's bodies with gay friends Jack said, "Yeah, I do; and they don't ever understand. And sometimes they poke fun. And I'm, like, 'OK, whatever.'"

Participants explained that their friends (who identified as heterosexual or bisexual) had a specific female body part they found especially attractive (for example, their legs, breasts, buttocks, etc.), They were familiar with their peers' preferences for

women's appearance, and they had preferences of their own regarding women's bodies. Women's bodies were frequently discussed with peers as a collection of sexually arousing body parts.

The Overt Sexualizing of Women's Bodies theme summarized interviewees' comments about objectifying women's bodies and how this bolstered same-sex friendships. Interviewees said that they knew the specific physical features their peers found attractive in women, and they had specific body parts they found attractive in women. Participants said that sexualizing about female bodies and discussing these thoughts was an explicit element of their sexual behavior and attitudes.

Covert Sexualizing of Men's Bodies

Although they stated that they watched and had sexual fantasies about men's bodies, none of the participants talked openly with gay or straight peers about their observations or fantasies about men, even if their friends knew they identified as bisexual (none of the interviewees mentioned they had groups of bisexual friends). Interviewees perceived that, if they talked about men's bodies with heterosexual peers, it would create, as Freddy put it, "an uncomfortable situation." Participants felt that, for heterosexual peers, to hear that a man was attracted to other men highlighted their differing sexual orientation identities and harmed rapport. For gay peers, comments about attraction or fantasies (for example, discussing someone with whom they would like to have sex) may make one appear promiscuous. Howard said,

> If I knew a guy that slept with a lot of different guys, I would think of him as promiscuous, whereas, if I knew a straight guy who had slept with a lot of girls, I'd just think of him as lucky. Gay friends are almost shy to tell me about what

they've done. With straight friends, I don't think there's as much fear of judgment there.

In general, when participants mentioned making any comments about men's appearance with gay peers, the comments were vague. These comments, for example, were about the overall attractiveness of someone or their level of fitness, such as, "He's good-looking," or, "Wow, he's hot." Bisexual interviewees stated they were only vaguely familiar with what their peers would find attractive in men and assumed their peers used the same criteria they themselves used (such as masculine demeanor, muscular body, attractive face, etc.). Interviewees said they were unsure whether they did not know this information because their peers who were attracted to other men did not have preferences, or if it simply was that they did not discuss them openly. Participants also said they did not discuss their sexual experiences with men and rarely heard other men talk about their sexual activities with other men. Men who had sex with many men were seen as promiscuous and also as being "lonely," "broken somehow," "depressed," or "troubled." Interviewees described that, when they did have sex with men, they did not tell peers. Dustin summed up what many interviewees also expressed:

> If you're a gay man, and you sleep around a lot, you are immediately, harshly judged by the gay community. You're a whore; you're sleazy; you're a slut. If a straight guy does, and I know plenty of straight guys that are whores, we don't say that straight guys are sluts when they sleep around with girls like that. It's always the gay guys and the girls who are slutty.

The Covert Sexualizing of Men's Bodies theme summarized the fact that, although interviewees viewed and sexually fantasized about both men's bodies, they did not discuss these openly with peers. Talking about attractions was avoided with heterosexual peers because it highlighted their differing sexual orientation identities, and avoided with gay peers in order to avoid being perceived as promiscuous. Interviewees

said that they did not know their peers' preferences for men's physical appearance. Participants also did not talk about their sexual activities with men.

Physical Appearance Is Important to Men Who Are Attracted to Men

Sixteen bisexual interviewees reported , although it was important to be judged attractive by both men and women, physical attractiveness was especially significant to gay men. Interviewees perceived men as much more critical about physical appearance than women. Participants described often feeling scrutinized by gay men and felt that gay men's decisions to pursue or ignore them was based foremost on their appearance. For example, Nelson said, "In the gay community, your outward appearance matters a lot. And I find that a lot of people only want to get to know you based on how you look." Although, in the heterosexual community, Patrick said women often found him attractive, he said that because of his age, he felt he was often "ignored or passed over a bit more often" by men who were attracted to men. Bisexual men said they felt they were often rejected by potential gay partners because of their appearance, whereas they did not feel their appearance was an important consideration with potential female partners whom they felt primarily valued the interpersonal dynamic.

These 16 bisexual interviewees said they perceived a high level of competition with other men for the attention of the most attractive men. Interviewees, however, did not indicate that it was necessarily very important to them to have an attractive partner. The bisexual interviewees gave two major reasons for this high level of competition among men regarding attractiveness. First, men who were attracted to men were seen as

preoccupied with finding the most attractive sexual and romantic partners as a validation

of their own attractiveness and social worth. Jamal said,

> I feel like I have more competition with men for other men's attention [than competition with men for women's attention]. In the gay community, it's all about how you look. When you're not super fit, most gay men aren't going to be attracted to you. If you don't have a certain body type or a certain way of acting, they don't find you attractive. If a guy has to choose between me and this ripped gay guy that's right next to me, they're gonna to go straight to the one they find most sexually attractive.

Participants described a sense of insecurity in their interactions with men that stemmed

from men's high expectations for physical attractiveness. Interviewees explained that

women did not have these same high expectations for attractiveness among potential

male partners.

Second, flirting with and pursuing men more frequently led to casual sex. Because

nonrelational sex with a man was often a more immediate possibility after winning a

man's attention, interviewees said that you were highly attuned to the sexual

attractiveness of a potential partner. JP explained:

> The women I tend to date more traditionally. We're not trying to get each other in bed really fast. While, on the other hand, with men, it tends to be more, at least one of the guys wanting to get sex. I definitely treat them very differently.

The Physical Appearance Is Important to Gay Men theme described the

interviewees' observation that gay men were more critical about physical appearance

than women. Gay men were seen as making decisions about which men to pursue based

on attractiveness. Participants described gay men as being competitive for the attention of

the most attractive men because it was socially validating and could lead to nonrelational

sex. Interviewees, however, did not indicate that physical attractiveness was especially

important to them.

The Importance of Emotional Connection

The bisexual men interviewed for this study underlined the importance of emotional intimacy with romantic partners. This theme was divided into four subsections. First, 16 of the interviewees reported the importance of expressiveness. Second, interviewees described the integral role of emotional connection in physical intimacy. Third, participants expressed their preferences for monogamous relationships. Finally, interviewees detailed how emotional connection was seen as separate from sex and that they did not confuse emotional connection and physical attraction.

Be Expressive with One's Partner

Emotional expressiveness was seen by the interviewees as facilitating emotional intimacy with partners. Sixteen of the men reported being comfortable expressing their emotions and enjoying the emotional parts of their relationships. These 16 participants reported that they enjoyed expressing their emotions with romantic partners and typically initiated talks about feelings with their partners. Jamal said, "I'm kind of an emotional person. I need to talk it out with people." Likewise, Dan said, "It's not hard for me to express whatever is going on." This included discussing both positive feelings of love and gratitude for their partners, as well as discussing insecurities, emotional needs, and problems within the relationship. In fact, these interviewees mentioned repeatedly the importance of having difficult discussions in a relationship surrounding challenges in the relationship. Only two interviewees reported that they had ever depended on someone else to help them express their emotion.

Interviewees pointed out that being expressive meant going against masculinity norms, because, as Everett pointed out, "Masculinity teaches people not to be so open." They recounted a history of feeling that they did not "fit in" with other men because of their level of emotional expressiveness. These men described feeling separate from other men (gay, heterosexual, and even other bisexual men) because of their intense desire to connect emotionally. Brad said that:

> A lot of it was just separating myself from how I grew up. Now I'll even tell somebody I'm with, "You can just say it, you don't have to hide or be afraid, just bring it out in the open, whatever you feel." It's a lot easier that way, I think.

These 16 interviewees felt that something about being bisexual made them inherently more emotionally sensitive than heterosexual or gay men. They attributed this to having to learn two sets of norms about relationships and sexual behavior, as well as having to vary ones' behavior according to setting. Interviewees mentioned they felt more perceptive than gay or straight peers about others' levels of interest and attraction. Some mentioned that the process of discovering one's own bisexual identity through introspection, experience, and identity developmental brought about heightened emotional awareness they did not see in others. Nate said:

> We read body language better, I think, facial expressions, with nuance. I think we're better listeners in general because we have to be. Bisexual men, in particular, are very aware of their surroundings all the time; especially in those types of social settings when you're out and about.

Emotional Connection as Integral to Sexual Connection

Seventeen of the bisexual men interviewed expressed their preference to only have sex when there is a significant emotional component for both partners. JP expressed, "I've never wanted to turn the emotion off in sex. I definitely prefer emotion in sex."

Kenny also felt strongly about the role of emotional connection in sex: "All of my sexual experiences have been emotional. I want to have that connection; and, if it's not there, don't even touch me." For most men, this meant rarely, if ever, having nonrelational sex, or one-night stands. Ricky summarized representatively, "The people that I have slept with, it has been people that I have dated for a while or that I've known for a while. Sex should only be with someone you're committed to, and I don't believe in sleeping around."

Not only was it their preference to have sex with emotional connection, interviewees also stated that it was difficult or impossible for them to separate sex and emotion. Because of the strong reaction many men reported they experienced during sex, these men reported they were cautious because they knew they would become even more emotionally connected to someone following physical intimacy. Jamal said,

> I feel like, when you're bisexual, you're more careful. If you have sex with someone, you feel like you're emotionally connected to that person. I can't do casual sex. I need somebody that I have that connection with first before I can feel like I can be that physical with somebody.

Many interviewees reported avoiding sex until they knew they were ready for the emotional intensity that sex would bring into their relationship with someone.

Interviewees also reported concern that the other person experienced this same level of emotional connection before having sex. They wanted to share an intimate experience through sex that would facilitate further emotional connection. Interviewees reported sensitivity to exploiting others and did not want their sexual partners to feel obligated to have sex. Only 2 of the bisexual interviewees reported ever having had sex with someone when the other person did not also want to have sex.

All 17 of these interviewees viewed emotional connection in sex as more important than the level of attraction of the sex partner. JP said, "There's a lot more to attraction. For me, it's more 90% emotional. The physical attraction is nice, but not if you can't connect with them emotionally or intellectually." Patrick said something similar: "I'm probably more a 90-10, where the emotion is more important. I can't have sex with a guy just because he's hot." Interviewees recounted that they had had sex with individuals whom they did not find especially attractive, but with whom they shared a personal connection. For example, Brad expressed, "I've had sex with people who aren't so attractive, but they have [had] a good personality or they're really nice." Interviewees also reported having the experience of finding certain men and women attractive, but they could not be fully attracted to the individual if they did not also find their personality attractive. JP recounted that he wasn't initially attracted to his partner, but after spending time together, he fell in love. He concluded, "So, my relationships are more emotionally based than physically based." Several interviewees also stated that they suspected that attractive people would not have attractive personalities and that they purposefully avoided attractive people. Nelson said, "People that are really attractive, there's nothing good on the inside." Mark similarly stated, "A lot of people who are really good looking don't really have substance, most of the times—both boys and girls."

Because of this emphasis on emotional connection in sex, when asked what "good sex" was, these men stated that good sex had a significant, intimate, emotional connection. Patrick described:

> Good sex is the entire gamut of feeling comfortable with the person. It's a touch, caress, being close. All of that evolves into a sense of closeness. And the guy is still there the next morning. Good sex is not a fuck and go.

Many reported that "the best" sex happened between two partners who had been together for some time and for whom sex was a way to deepen the emotional relationship. Dustin summed many interviewees' comments when he stated:

> Good sex would be when you're in a relationship with somebody and you're monogamous and you're making love. You just feel this connection and you're physically and emotionally connected.

Also related to the emphasis on emotionally connecting to sexual partners, only one interviewee reported regularly going to strip clubs (he stated these outings were related to activities with his fraternity members). Five reported having gone to a strip club with friends on one or two occasions, then finding the experience disappointing because of a lack of opportunity to find deeper connection. As Jack put it, "I've gone to strip clubs, but it doesn't turn me on. It is emotionless. And I think that's why I don't like it." Kyle also said,

> It's so phony and unattractive and unappealing. I'm so romantic about sex and the strip club is the antithesis of that, and I find it really upsetting to me, because I know how great connected sex is; and, so, any of these dehumanizing environments that are about sex, they don't work for me.

Some interviewees also mentioned lack of an emotional component as the reason why they did not frequently use pornography. In terms of frequency of pornography use, ten of the interviewees reported they looked at pornography less than once a week. Interviewees reported that they did not find pornography engaging because of the lack of authentic connection between people. Percy explained,

> Kindness is important, and kindness is absence in porn. I don't watch a lot of porn. Like, I don't like to see the portrayal of women. It seems degrading. A lot of straight porn just seems like the man dominates, the woman gives. What about her?

Interviewees pointed out that enjoying this emotional connection in sex put them at odds with what they had been socialized about masculine behavior. It was uncommon, in their view, for men to enjoy intimacy that was not based on the performance aspects of sexual acts and of physical pleasure. Several mentioned that identifying as bisexual allowed them a sense that they could divorce themselves from these masculinity role expectations and emotionally connect during sex. Everett explained that for men who adhere to masculinity norms:

> There is no longing…they have lost their intuition with emotion during sex, or emotion during anything. You just become numb. They don't remember what it's like to be in love and feel and understand that emotional touch. But for queer men, we're still there. There's something that hasn't left because of societal negligence. With bisexual men, it's like, I get to give you affection and love no matter who you are because I have no hang ups.

Desire for a Monogamous Relationship

Sixteen interviewees explained that monogamous relationships afforded the most emotional connection and were thus more desirable than open relationships. Participants explained that, because of a strong link between emotional connection and sex, they did not wish for their partners to have sex with others after entering into a relationship. When Jack was asked if he would enjoy being in an open relationship at some point, he replied:

> It would be too hard. I like the emotional aspect of a relationship. I like having the whole sexual partner being like, an emotional partner as well. I'm one that thinks sex is really, really tightly tied to the emotional aspect. It's ok for other people, but it's not something that I would want.

Although several bisexual men interviewed thought that other bisexual men would ideally find an open relationship (perceptions about other bisexual men's relationships are discussed below), only three of the men interviewed had been in, were

currently in, or would like to be in an open relationship. Bisexual interviewees frequently

stated that they sought committed, monogamous relationships because the idea of an

open relationship felt emotionally disconnected. Bisexual men also frequently described

themselves as "loyal" in relationships. They explained that being sexually committed

brought them a sense of closeness and intimacy with their partners and that "cheating"

would be "disrespectful" and "dishonest." For example, Patrick explained that trust was

the most intimate emotion two partners could share, and that trust was best fostered in a

monogamous relationship. He also made these points about open relationships:

> If you have sex with multiple people and maintain this primary relationship, the quality of that emotional relationship is just stuck at a certain point. They miss some of the highs in that relationship. They're happy because they have lower expectations of themselves and of others. Being in a relationship means giving up all other possibilities.

These interviewees pointed out that open relationships put attraction and sex above the

emotional connection, which led to emotional hurt and disconnection.

Emotional Connection as Separate from Sexual Connection

   Although participants said it was common for their male peers to have sex in

order to avoid talking about emotions, 17 bisexual participants reported they did not use

sex as a way to avoid emotional expression. Talking about feelings was something they

reported enjoying as an intimate connection that was separate from sex. As a result, when

asked if they ever had sex in order to avoid emotional conflict or had sex to accelerate an

emotional connection, only 2 of the 20 interviewees replied affirmatively. Ricky

explained:

> I don't have sex instead of being emotionally close. If I'm going to hang out with someone, we're going to hang out, not sleep around. If I have feelings that I need

to talk about, then I'll say them, I won't sleep with someone in order to say, 'This is how I feel."

Related to the separation of emotional connection from sex, bisexual interviewees also reported they did not confuse feelings of closeness with friends for sexual feelings. That is to say, if an interviewee felt emotional connection with a friend, that emotional closeness was not sexualized or interpreted as meaning physical attraction. Participants explained that putting the emotional connection with the friend in jeopardy for a physical relationship was not seen as a good risk. A comment by Freddy was representative of several interviewees' shared view about this: "The moment you cross that line with a friend, it's not the same. When it ends, you lose some of the friendship because of the awkwardness. You're not longer the friend the he or she comes to talk to."

A distinction to the separation of sexual feelings and emotional closeness, however, was interviewees recounting that they had often been friends with their romantic partners for some time before they became romantically involved. Many said that, after becoming emotionally connected to a friend, they later considered pursing them romantically. Ralph said, "The girls I have dated were my best friends [first] before they became my girlfriends." Patrick also explained, "If you have a friend, the friendship is generally a good foundation for a sexual relationship. But I've never had a friend that I then had confusing issues with sexual feelings with."

The most extreme views about separating sex and emotional closeness were expressed by 5 interviewees who explained that they avoid sex when they want to achieve a deep emotional connection with their partner. These interviewees said they chose other activities besides sex in order to not have the physical connection detract from emotional closeness. These men reiterated that emotional closeness was the most

important element of a relationship and that sex did not always yield emotional closeness

or could distract from achieving emotional closeness. These interviewees pointed out

that, if they desired emotional closeness, having sex would actually, as Dan said, "make it

worse," because sex was not always immediately linked to emotional connection in the

same way as other activities, such as verbal disclosure. Howard said:

> If you really want to be emotionally close to someone, sex isn't the thing that will give you the closeness you want. It's just cuddling or being together or that kind of thing that would satisfy that for me.

Jack further explained,

> It's not like I deny sex. But I'll find some other way so that sex isn't the key to the closeness. If you want to be emotionally close with someone, sex is important, but sex alone isn't going to give you the closeness. There's like the friendship aspect, the sitting on the couch and cuddling and talking.

The Importance of the Emotional Connection theme underlined, first, the

importance interviewees placed on emotional expressiveness. Bisexual interviewees

discussed their desire to be in a monogamous relationship because it fostered emotional

closeness and preferred to have sex only when there was a high degree of emotional

involvement for both partners. Participants discussed how the emphasis they placed on

emotion in sex put them at odds with masculine role norms.

<center>Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men</center>

Although most of the interviewees discussed their desires to be emotionally

expressive, 12 of the interviewees pointed out that this expressiveness was more difficult

to accomplish in relationships with other men. This theme was segmented into three

subsections. First, all participants said women were more emotionally expressive and

more trustworthy than men. Second, women were seen as more attentive to the emotional

elements of physical intimacy. Third, as a result of difficulty connecting emotionally with men, 19 participants said they occasionally had engaged in nonrelational sex with men.

More Emotional Connection with Women Than Men

Twelve interviewees stated that, in general, it was much easier to communicate and emotionally connect with female partners than with male partners. Women were seen as more forthright in disclosing their own emotional lives and also as facilitating disclosure with men. They described feeling a lack of judgment from women and a high level of acceptance.

This was in stark contrast to their sense that men resisted emotional disclosure, avoided talking about difficulties in the relationship (such as sadness or vulnerability), and were uncomfortable with others' disclosures. Participants reported that, with men, it was more difficult to have direct communication about their personal lives and about the dynamics of the relationship. Mark said,

> With women, emotions are a lot easier to bring up. With men, it's very, "How do I get this out of you? How do I get at how you're feeling? Because I don't know unless you tell me." But, at the same time, I feel like men are, like, "I'm tough. I don't wear my feelings on my sleeves, you don't need to know how I'm feeling." So it can be a tricky situation to get it out. It's like, "I need to know what's happening in your brain right now because I need to know to make this all work.

These 12 interviewees pointed out that gay men were actually more similar to the straight men they knew, in terms of their inability and unwillingness to share emotion. They reported that their most frequent conflict in relationships with men was surrounding issues of emotional disclosure, a difficulty they did not experience with their female partners.

Because of this desire for emotional connection in their relationships with women, all but two interviewees discussed difficulty with "game," or "swagger." These terms described a series of strategies men use to win sexual validation from women in the form of either lasting affection or a brief sexual relationship. When asked why it was that some men were able to have sex with the most attractive women, Mark said, "They must have something going on—some kind of swagger type deal of, like, they can talk their game and have anybody they want." Jack said:

> You can hit on a girl directly at the bar, but that doesn't happen very often. Most of the time, a guy will get to know a girl and hang out with them alone or separately and take them on a date, and use more, like, the chivalry approach, even if it's just for a means to an end, to get them in bed. Girls want to play the game. You have to invest at least a little bit of time.

Eighteen participants described themselves as unable or unwilling to maintain an appearance of emotional detachment that was seen as key to these strategies with women. For example, interviewees mentioned they dated women with whom they felt they could communicate openly and did not feel comfortable pursuing women through game. Brad said,

> It's weird being in the straight world, because I don't like to chase after women. Last time I dated a girl, it was fun because we were, like, best friends first. I don't like to, like, "I'm going to go looking for girls tonight." If I go out, I'm usually off standing in a corner. It's just a big eye game. It makes you feel uncomfortable more than anything. It's just a big headache. I feel bad for straight people.

These interviewees reported they did not enjoy going out to bars or clubs, said they had difficulty talking to people they did not know, felt uncomfortable flirting, and most often dated women they met through friends. Some interviewees also related this discomfort with "game" to being shy. Eight of the participants described themselves as shy. For example, Freddy said, "I have no game. I'm very shy. If I meet a girl, it's through my

friends." Others said they were unwilling to be emotionally aloof or remain emotionally distant from women in whom they were interested. Ace said, "You want to appeal to a girl. You want to seem cool and chill. I can't do that." These men felt disingenuous trying to manipulate people by, for example, leading them to believe they were more invested in the development of a relationship that they actually were. For example, Kenny said, "I'm not playing games with anyone. I don't think it's ok. I don't like to lead people on. If I do like someone, I'll say it. If I don't like anything, I won't say it."

Sex with Women Emphasized Emotional Attentiveness

More than Sex with Men

All participants described women as placing more value on an emotional connection during sex and said that sex with women involved more emotional connection than sex with men. They also explained that emotional attentiveness was necessary for sex to be pleasurable for a woman. They clarified that bringing a woman to orgasm required more intuitive sensitivity as compared to sex with a same-sex partner.

Through developing their sexual self-schema, men had to become acquainted with women's bodies, sexual arousal patterns, and the technicalities of facilitating women's physical pleasure. For example, Everett said, "There is more skill when it comes to pleasing women than there is when it comes to pleasing a man. It boils down to anatomy and observation of the woman you're with." Secondly, they had to learn to communicate with women during sex, verbally and nonverbally, about the woman's physical pleasure. Jamal said:

> I think it's different for men because gay guys will come for just about anything. I think that straight men have a little bit more of a disillusion image about sex

because half the time a woman isn't coming during sex. It's harder for them. I feel like it would be more aggressive with sex with men. With women, they want that emotional connection because most women I talk to will say that it's that closeness that you get with that person that turns them on to the sex. I guess with men that closeness doesn't really matter. I think it's less involved.

When he was asked about sexual experiences with women, Nate also expressed the importance of emotional connection. He said:

A girl is not just going to come. You're in tune with what's happening with her, and that's just a fantastic sexual experience and connection that you have with one another. It's all about the interpersonal relationship. It's intuitiveness with the feminine that you're able to fulfill her in the way she needs to be fulfilled. We don't have that equipment, we don't know what that feels like, but if we're actually paying attention to her and what her body signals are, and vice versa, that's just hot.

Occasional Unemotional Sex With Men

As mentioned above, interviewees stated it was their preference to have emotionally connected sex. Interviewees rarely discussed having nonrelational, casual sex with women or sex with women where they did not feel that emotional connection was central to the experience. Nineteen participants did recount, however, that they occasionally had unemotional sex with men. They described this as frequently the only connection they were able to share with men because of men's reluctance to express themselves emotionally.

Emotional connection was not viewed as integrative to sex with men. Participants explained that, during sex with other men, it was rare that both sex partners did not both reach climax and that there was relatively little sexual skill involved. Sex with men did not require the same consideration of a partner's sensation, his emotional state, and attentiveness to the connection. Howard discussed feeling a sense that, while being

emotionally connected was important to sex with women, he felt that this emotion could be absent during sex with male partner:

> With women, you've got to do the right thing at the right time, the right way, when she's in the right mood. I don't need to factor in a guy's emotional state in how pleased he's going to be or how I'm going to be able to please him….I can be emotionally distant and going from person to person. I can be kind of a scoundrel sometimes with men.

Bisexual interviewees said they could communicate more directly with men, which often facilitated casual sex. As mentioned above, participants said they felt they lacked game with women because of an inability to be inauthentic. In contrast, participants felt that interactions with men were more comfortable because they could be genuine, and men were seen as being more frank in their communication. Women were seen as more hesitant to engage in casual sex and required more time and investment in order for them to express sexual interest.

Interviewees in general also did not report enjoying the feeling that they were chasing women. Interviewees mentioned that in interactions with women, they felt more responsible for their emotional comfort. They expressed the desire to not hurt women's' feelings, to not give them a sense that they are being rejected, whereas they did not feel this same need to protect men. Mark said, "With a guy I'm kind of more straightforward and honest, because I feel like guys should be stronger and should take it with a grain of salt. I expect that of other men. No sugar-coating." Interviewees said that they could tell other men when they were not interested in them sexually, for example, and not feel a sense of guilt; but, with women, they often felt the need to be gentle or indirect in avoiding women they were not interested in pursuing. Jack said,

> With girls, it's different, you can't just say, "You know, I know you're hitting on me right now, I don't want anything with you." I can't say that without having

that be a really awkward situation and having her being totally put off by me. It's hard with girls. I have to say, "I have stuff going on," because I don't want to lead her on. It's easier with gay guys to say, "I'm just not interested in you." Gay guys are actually pretty cool like that; they just say, "It's cool."

Men were also seen as easier to approach because they shared the responsibility to move the interaction forward. Interviewees said that this shared responsibility allowed them to not feel the same sense of being an "aggressor" in pursuing other men or of having nonrelational sex. Participants explained they felt that men equally shared power in interactions that led to further sexual or romantic interest.

Finally, bisexual men stated that men they dated did not feel comfortable discussing their emotional lives with other men. Although bisexual men expressed interest in connecting with other men on an emotional level, men they met engaged in sex rather than emotional disclosure. They highlighted that talk about feelings elicited fear of vulnerability and fear of acting feminine. Sex was a method of avoiding emotional disclosure while still having a sense of intimacy.

The theme Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men described bisexual men's experience of reluctance on the part of men to be expressive. They also described a greater ease in communicating about emotions with women, and the importance of emotion in sex with women. Although they recounted infrequent casual sex with women, interviewees recounted they occasionally had nonrelational sex with men.

Bisexual Men's Anxieties About Long-term Relationships

When asked about their observations of other bisexual men's relationships, as well as plans for their own future relationships, seventeen bisexual interviewees expressed many unresolved concerns. This theme was divided into three subsections.

First, participants explained that, although they may be attracted to both men and women, there were significant sociopolitical advantages of pursing a heterosexual lifestyle, which affected their consideration of pursuing a relationship with a man. Second, although the men interviewed hoped to eventually establish a monogamous relationship, they had not seen other bisexual men be loyal in monogamous relationships. This led to anxiety that they, too, would not be able to be faithful in monogamous relationships. Third, women were seen as more likely to be monogamous and loyal in a relationship.

The Sociopolitical Advantages of a Heterosexual Lifestyle

Kyle said, "When society sees me with a woman, I get a lot of pats on the back. I could go further in my company if I had a beautiful wife." Although the men interviewed felt attraction to both sexes, there were clearly sociopolitical costs attached to relationships with men. Thirteen participants talked about feeling pressure to choose a heterosexual relationship for reasons of social power. This often led to feeling social pressure to choose to ignore their attractions to men and only consider women as long-term partners. As Jamal put it:

> You're going to live a really unhappy life if you are unsure of how things are going to play out in your life as far as relationships go—especially when you're bisexual. You have to just be open about the possibilities; because with a lot of bisexual men, they will go for what is the social norm. Bisexual men would be less likely to be in a long-term relationship with a man because it would be looked down upon, so they just focus more on being in relationships with women.

These thirteen participants pointed out that both cultural heterosexism and internalized heterosexism discouraged them from considering they might be happiest in same-sex relationship. These interviewees discussed how overcoming heterosexism and considering a long-term relationship with a man might help bisexual men marry a partner

whom they truly love and with whom they could have a lasting relationship. Otherwise, interviewees said many bisexual men succumb to social pressure, marry a woman, and, in some cases, might be unfaithful in their committed relationship. Patrick recounted how this sociopolitical pressure played out in his own marriage:

> I [myself] wanted to be with a woman because I wanted to have children with her, I wanted the home, the family life, and all that went along with it. Now that I've had some opportunities to explore with other men who are fathers or other men who are in relationships where they're raising children together, I see that there are other paradigms for raising a family. It doesn't necessarily have to be a man-woman paradigm."

Freddy added, "Until people start accepting gay relationships and gay lifestyles, we're [i.e., bisexual men] not going to be able to be as comfortable either."

Eight participants pointed out that overcoming heterosexism to consider a relationship with a man also meant confronting the potential social punishment for acting against masculinity norms. These men explained that masculinity is marked by heterosexual desire and avoidance of emotional intimacy with men. Acting outside those norms would be a loss of masculinity validation. Nate explained, "The idea of having to be masculine to be accepted is one of those things that manifests because of prior hurt or pain." As a result of past socialization experiences and being punished for acting outside standards of traditional masculinity, bisexual men may have varying degrees of difficulty considering the possibility of partnering with a man. Freddy explained more about this loss of social acceptance from acting outside of masculinity:

> It has to do with what's expected of a man. It has to do with what it takes to be a breadwinner, to be the head of a household. It would be difficulty in a gay setting. There are certain things that need to be given up [in a gay relationship]. It would be a big compromise for me to do that. It's difficult to have a gay relationship and have it be accepted in the social realm. You can have a long-term relationship with a guy. You have to give up social acceptance.

Not only does one give up explicit forms of social acceptance, such as being the breadwinner or having a traditional family as Freddy mentioned, but one may also feel failure in meeting an internalized self-concept that pressures that may have roots in societal pressures.

Four men of color also pointed out is based in masculinity norms. Ian explained that acting against masculinity norms is difficult because of internalized policing of gender role expectations:

> Especially if you're male, because of gender roles, once it is discovered that there is an attraction to more than just one gender, a lot of forced decision making happens. When I say "forced decision-making," I don't necessarily mean that it comes from societal pressures. I think it's from internal that, for minority men, the choice to eventually be in a long-term relationship with a woman may have to do with not only avoiding homonegativity, but also avoiding compounded minority identities.

Nelson, who identified as Pacific Islander, explained, "[Bisexual] guys of color, especially, end up with women because it's more accepted. I think with minorities, it's not as easy, it's not as accepted [to be with a man], as if you're White." Freddy, who identified as Latino, added, "It's not just in the Latino culture, there are other cultures where it's not acceptable to marry a man and you have to do these things, have kids or whatever, according to their culture."

Nonmonogamy

Bisexual men had a complicated view of monogamy. Participants wanted to be in a monogamous relationship, but they assumed other bisexual men were not monogamous in their relationships. Participants were also afraid they would not be able to be faithful in monogamous relationships.

Seventeen of the interviewees said that they wanted to have, or were currently in, a monogamous relationship. Only 2 of the participants reported that they had had extra-relational sexual encounters outside of a current or past relationship (and both reported that the extrarelational sex partner was male). However, interviewees perceived that other bisexual men had and wanted open relationships. When asked why other men had nonmonogamous relationships, eleven perceived that, because of the sociopolitical advantages of living a heterosexual lifestyle, other bisexual men's lives were structured around having a primary female partner while also having secondary sexual and romantic relationships with men. This was attributed to the fact that bisexual men may adhere to traditional heterosexual relationships in order to avoid the heterosexism and homonegativity as a social consequence of same-sex relationships.

In discussing other bisexual men's relationships, they observed that having sex outside the primary relationship with a woman varied in its transparency. Men may disclose these sexual encounters within the context of an open relationship or in relationships that were, as Spencer put it, "slightly open," which he described as a situation in which a bisexual man may have sex with other men in the context of threesomes or group sex where his wife is present. But the majority of interviewees reported the bisexual married men they knew keep their sexual encounters with other men secret because they were in relationship believed to be monogamous. Howard, the only interviewee who was married to a woman and had nonrelational sex with men, agreed that satisfying his bisexual desire was a difficulty in his marriage and that he kept his sexual meetings with men a secret from his wife. He explained,

> I will always be attracted to men. The problem is, though, my wife is straight all
> the time, and I know there are times when I'm neglecting her needs. But it's, like,

I'm just not into women that week. So I see that as a problem for myself, and I'm sure that could be an issue for other bi men.

Brad, who was acquainted with several bisexual men who were married but had affairs they kept secret, explained:

A lot of bi guys live double lives, most of them that I've met or chatted with. They're pretty much straight and usually have their life at home and then their secret life on the side. They mess around secretly with men.

These interviewees pointed out that the social and cultural pressure to exercise their bisexual desire as a "secret life" leads to a lack of integrity that they felt other bisexual men may see as necessary. Patrick said:

Bi men may have gotten married and then wind up having several or many relationships on the side while their wife is unknowing. They kind of establish a certain ability to have a relationship that involves a lack of integrity.

In this way, bisexual men can have a family life that is congruent with traditional family structures and meets the approval of social and religious norms. Eventually, however, bisexual men may consider extramarital affairs as a way to cope with their troubling, ongoing desires.

To add to this complicated view of nonmonogamy, participants' fear that they would not be able to fully satisfy their bisexual desire in a monogamous long-term relationship was the most mentioned reason why they had not entered into a committed relationship (this fear was mentioned by 14 of those interviewed). Dustin said, "My relatives and my family, they said, 'But if you like girls, too, why not be straight and have a family? Choose to be straight, it's so much easier.' I can't, because the other part of me is still there." Many said they knew few bisexual men in relationships, and they themselves had been in few long-term relationships. Only three of the men interviewed reported that they were currently in long-term relationships. Additionally, three

interviewees felt they would never enter into long-term relationships because of the fear

that a part of their desire would be unfulfilled in a monogamous relationship. As JP put it,

"I don't see myself getting into a relationship. There are just too many complications for

a relationship to be very likely." Or, as Dustin said:

> If I ended up getting married to a woman, it would be hard for me. Not that I
> would cheat on her, but I know that I wouldn't be able to be mentally faithful to
> her, because I would always have those urges [to be with men] as well… I've lost
> hope in relationships, and I'm kind of discouraged. I pretty much have accepted
> the fact that I may never be in a relationship.

Several interviewees mentioned that, in order to find themselves in a long-term

relationship in the future, they would have to seriously consider their ability to stay true

to whatever commitment they eventually made in a relationship, whether that be a

promise of monogamy or to stay within the confines of the established rules in an open

relationship. Percy said, "There's a conflict in learning to make your life congruent with

your ideals and your promises and your word. When bi men have arrived at a place of

maturity or self-peace, they can make their relationships work."

Women More Likely to Be Monogamous

Interviewees asserted that women were more likely to be monogamous and more

loyal in long-term relationships than men. Sex with women was seen as an indication that

the woman was emotionally invested and committed to the relationship. Women were

also seen as more trustworthy, and interviewees said they did not worry that women

would remain loyal in a relationship.

In contrast, participants feared men would be unfaithful. This was attributed to the

higher level of emotional connection in sex with women, whereas interviewees felt that

the sense that men could separate sex and emotional connection led to uncertainty about their fidelity. Freddy said:

> Women have more of an emotional bond with you. Once you build an emotional bond with a woman, it's stronger. And there are temptations out there, but it's not as probing as with men. Men are more fickle. If I had a boyfriend, I wouldn't say that I expect him to cheat on me. I think that men act on more impulses. You feel like you have to keep up or this other person may lose interest or somebody else may come along.

Bisexual Men's Anxieties About Long-term Relationships summed interviewees' anxieties about the sociopolitical costs of relationships with men and the pressure to choose a female partner because of cultural and internalized heterosexism. Women were also seen as potentially more loyal as long-term partners, and participants feared men would be unfaithful. Participants also described the fear that they would not find satisfaction in a long-term, monogamous relationship.

Belief that Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality

Sixteen interviewees reported commonly feeling there were a number of biases against them as potential partners that had to be overcome in order to establish a long-term relationship. Because of others' preconceived notions of bisexuality, many reported they had difficulty finding others to date them. For example, Dan recounted, "It has happened a few times that I went out with guys that were gay and they thought that I was gay, and when they realized I was bisexual, they literally kicked me out and said horrible, rude things." As a result of these experiences, many interviewees felt the need conceal their sexual orientation identity with potential partners until they could establish trust with someone. For the 11 men that were not fully out about their sexual orientation, these concerns that others had misperceptions about bisexual men also played a role in their

decision to not disclose their sexual orientation identity to family, friends, or coworkers. This theme was divided into three subsections. First, interviewees described the publically held belief that bisexual men are incapable of monogamy. Second, they recounted the belief that bisexual men are in reality gay men who are hesitant to be open about their sexual orientation identity. Third, participants discussed the misconception that bisexual men are confused about their sexual orientation identity.

Belief that Bisexual Men Cannot Be Monogamous

These 16 participants said they had encountered the fear, both on the part of individuals they had dated or with whom they had had long-term relationships, that their bisexual desire would make monogamy difficult or impossible. Monogamy was equated with also being attracted to only one sex (either men or women), and interviewees had encountered many people who equated bisexuality with the necessity of having open relationships. Half of the men interviewed stated that this perception that bisexual men could not be monogamous was the greatest impediment to finding someone to date. Interviewees explained that many believe bisexual men were more likely to be disloyal in a relationship because there was the possibility of having extrarelational sex with both men and women, which somehow increased the probability of an affair occurring. Spencer explained:

> No matter which sex you're with, I've had people feel insecure that, instead of just looking at 50% of the population, you're scoping out 100% of the population, which really isn't the case. I want to say, "Just because I like guys doesn't mean I like 100% of the guys." It doesn't mean [I'm attracted to] 100% of the population.

Participants also had the experience of partners being fearful that they would want to have nonrelational sex with someone of the other sex in order to satisfy the spectrum of their sexual desire.

Those interviewed said their friends perceived bisexual men as opportunistic seekers of as many sexual experiences as possible. Several interviewees reported that their friends had called them names or phrases such as, "pimp," "player," "man whore," "sex addict," or "not the dating type." Jack reported that a friend recently said to him:

> "Oh, you're just a player. You just want to get around." And I go, 'No, I'm honestly looking for a partner. I want to have a monogamous relationship with an individual and hopefully someone where I can form a bond that will last a lifetime."

Interviewees believed peers had this negative attitude toward them because they were jealous. In their view, peers feared that bisexual men are somehow more competitive in obtaining potential sexual and romantic partners.

Belief that Bisexual Men Are Actually Gay

Sixteen participants explained that they frequently faced the misconception that bisexual men were actually gay. There were two explanations given for why others may believe they are essentially gay despite their assertion of bisexual sexual orientation. First, on a developmental trajectory, interviewees said they encountered the belief that bisexual men were on a path toward figuring out that they were gay but were naïve to their true identities. They had not yet had the necessary experiences or personal insights to reach the conclusion that they were exclusively attracted to men. Kyle explained, "People tend to disbelieve that bisexuality exists. For them, bi people are just gay people who haven't come out yet." Participants also said this point was reinforced by the fact

that they knew many gay men who did initially say they were bisexual as they transitioned into an exclusively gay sexual orientation identity.

Second, interviewees said there were those who believed that bisexual men avoided sociopolitical consequences of homonegativity by not publically identifying as gay. Interviewees said that gay men, especially, supposed this was the case when a man asserted he was bisexual. Patrick articulated what many participants said: "Gay men think that bisexual men haven't been honest enough and are still hanging on to some semblance of trying to be straight or looking like straight guys." Many of these interviewees reported that they had difficulty finding gay men who would date them because of this attitude that bisexual men were somehow homonegative gay men who were too fearful of embracing their true identity. Interviewees believed bisexual men from strong religious backgrounds were most likely to submit to social pressure to hide their attractions to men. For example, Kyle, who does not identify as religious, recounted being told by one gay man he had just met and told he was bisexual, "You religious bigot, you're so screwed up in the head."

Coming out as bisexual in order to avoid homonegativity was a strategy more frequently reported by White interviewees about other bisexual men. Four of the men of color, however, reported that other bisexual men of color rarely came out as gay in order to avoid heterosexism. They said that this was less the case for them, because, in their communities, bisexuality was viewed as negatively as homosexuality. Freddy said:

> I'm Hispanic, and I think that gay or bisexual relationships are not seen in an ok manner. But then you look at, like, Brazilian men, they're very open sexually, and I think that European men are more open sexually as well. They're more open to that idea of men with men than Latino men.

Nelson also echoed this: "It's easier for a White man to be out, culturally, because in my culture, the Samoan culture, it's harder to be out." Although White men reported experiences of being taunted for being gay, men of color reported cases of being taunted for being gay or even being perceived as bisexual.

Belief That Bisexual Men Are Confused About Their Sexual Identity

Another frequently encountered belief about bisexual men was that they were indecisive. Brad talked about a recent encounter with a friend:

> I recently had a girlfriend who was, like, "You still dating that one girl?" And I was, like, "No, I'm dating a guy now." And she was, like, "Well, make up your mind." People don't get it; they think you've got to be one side or the other.

Ricky also said, "My friend just said, 'Yeah, I think you're confused right now.' And in my head, I'm like, 'No, I feel like I'm not.'" Participants equated the misconception that bisexual men are confused with a misunderstanding of bisexuality as a valid sexual orientation for men.

Women's Discomfort Regarding Sexual/Relationship History

Participants said gay men they had dated were comfortable dating a man who had had relationships with women at some point in their lives. This was because many gay men whom they had met, at one point along their sexual identity development, had dated a woman. Interviewees perceived that women, however, were less comfortable dating a man who had had a previous relationship with a man. They explained this is because women may perceive bisexual men to actually be gay, but succumbing to social pressure to marry a woman and live a heterosexual lifestyle. Freddy said:

> This is a stigma that if a man has had a relationship with a man, and is now with a woman, that he'll go back. If a man is gay, and he's pressured to live a certain lifestyle, to marry and to have kids, then, [if] they come out [later], it causes a lot of problems for the family that they've created. Women think you're never going to be happy with only them. It would build an insecurity in the relationship that would be hard to overcome. I've never really met anybody that would be comfortable with the whole idea.

This may lead to bisexual men choosing not to disclose their sexual orientation identity to a female partner. Dan illustrated, "It's a little harder dating women. Most bisexual people who are with a woman, their partner doesn't know anything about them being bisexual."

This theme explained biases interviewees believed others had against them as bisexual men. These included the belief that bisexual men were indecisive, or were actually gay men who were avoiding the sociopolitical costs of being identified as gay, or were at some point in developing a gay sexual orientation identity. Interviewees reported that this caused them to not be open about their sexual orientation identity with potential partners until they had established a certain amount of trust.

<div align="center">Finding the "Right Person"</div>

Nine interviewees made statements like this one from Jamal: "I feel like bisexuality has less to do with a person's sex and more to do with the person." Bisexual interviewees repeatedly emphasized that the character of their romantic and sexual partner was the deciding factor in their level of attraction. Although most interviewees stated that they were more attracted to women or men, these interviewees repeatedly underlined that the sex of the partner was not important. Jack put it this way: "It's based on the individual. I find myself being attracted to individuals rather than being attracted to one sex in general. It doesn't really matter what the sex is." Some saw a bisexual

sexual orientation as allowing them the best opportunity to find this deep, unique intimacy because they could eventually partner with whomever they felt the most connected, regardless of their sex. Freddy said:

> If you meet a person that attracts you and that person is somebody you can see a long-term goal with, then why not? It doesn't matter what their sex is. You fall in love with the person you fall in love with. If you want to spend the rest of your life with them, that's what really matters. It's the person that matters.

Both White interviewees and interviewees of color said they were in general attracted to individuals from a wide range of ethnic/cultural backgrounds, and few mentioned being less attracted to individuals from any one background (White, Black, Asian, etc.). Mark stated, for example, "I don't find attraction in any one race. I find it all over. Attractive people come in all kinds of races and varieties." Jack similarly said, "I have really enjoyed dating a wide range of people from diverse cultural backgrounds." Again, interviewees emphasized that their attraction to an individual would not be based on their racial background, but by their personality.

As mentioned above, considering the future potential of long-term relationships brought up anxieties about monogamy and heterosexism for participants. There was also apprehension that biases against bisexual men may hinder a partner's interest in pursuing a long-term relationship. However, 15 of the 17 single bisexual men stressed that these concerns could be resolved if they could find the "right person." These men frequently mentioned that having a deep connection with their partner would help them overcome the internalized fear that they could not be monogamous, as well as societal homonegativity should they be partnered with a man. The most frequently mentioned characteristics men were looking for in the "right person" were being "understanding" and "committed." Five interviewees pointed out that the desire to have biological

children of their own might influence them to eventually choose a woman as a long-term partner; however, the majority said that their desire to have a family would not determine if the "right person" were a man or a woman.

Finding the "right person" referred to interviewees' emphasis that the sex of a potential partner was not as important as finding someone whose character they found attractive. Finding the "right person" as a partner was seen as the solution to overcoming both societal heterosexism and fears that they would not be happy in a monogamous relationship. An individual whom the participants found compatible was also judged to be free of bias or preconceived judgment about male bisexuality.

<p style="text-align:center">The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction</p>

All bisexual participants explained that their awareness of their bisexual attraction, as well as their sexual and romantic behavior and attitudes, shifted through time. These experiences, evolving awareness of their dual attraction, and participants' gradual development of sexual orientation identity were positioned into a conceptual framework detailing this process.

Experiential Factors.

Experiential Factors: The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction describes how experience contributed to this dynamic development of the sexual self-schema. Sixteen bisexual participants had their first sexual and romantic relationships with women. In terms of their sexual and romantic histories with women, eighteen of the participants had been in a romantic relationship with a woman that had lasted at least 3

months. Seventeen had had at least two sexual experiences with women. In addition to

their authentic attraction to women, some attributed the fact that they had had their first

sexual and romantic experiences with women to masculinity socialization and cultural

norms that led them to follow other male peers and date and pursue relationships with

women.

In late adolescence, participants recounted that they began having nonrelational

sexual encounters with men. Sexual activity was followed later by the development of

their romantic feelings for men, which led to dating and relationships with men. Freddy

said:

> Growing up, I dated women. I had an attraction toward men, but never to the
> point of a relationship or anything long-term, or dating even. But then I met
> somebody and started dating him. I mean, before that I thought you could have
> chemistry with someone, but you wouldn't necessarily see it as a long-term thing.
> I never thought I would be in a relationship with a man. I always thought that it
> would be a side thing.

In terms of their sexual and romantic histories with men, 19 of the participants said they

had had at least 2 sexual experiences with men; 17 of these men also had had at least one

romantic relationship with a man that had lasted at least 3 months.

Attraction Awareness Dimensions. Sixteen bisexual participants described first

having a sense that they were attracted to women. Eventually, in their late adolescence or

early 20s, they discovered, or allowed themselves to admit, that they were also sexually

attracted to men. After having at least one sexual experience with a man, 13 of the men

interviewed began to understand that they were dually attracted to men and women.

Spencer recounted, "For me, once I went down the path and hooked up with another guy

and liked it is when I understood that I am bi." For the remaining men, additional,

ongoing sexual and romantic experiences with both men and women eventually resulted in this awareness.

Identity Outcomes. Because of their initial awareness of their attraction to women, as well as sexual and romantic experiences with women, sixteen bisexual interviewees first presumed they were heterosexual. After at least one sexual experience with a man, 13 participants began to identify as bisexual. However, for seven participants, the transition from heterosexual orientation identity to bisexual identity was not as direct. In the course of determining that they were attracted to both men and women, seven of the interviewees recounted that they identified for a period as gay, in part because they were told by peers that feeling attracted to both men and women was the first step in developing a gay sexual orientation identity. However, with time and further experimentation, these men determined they were actually attracted to both sexes. Spencer illustrated,

> At first I dated girls, had sex with girls. Then I dated guys, had sex with guys, and I told my parents I was gay because I tried that and I liked it, I must be gay. And then I went back and had sex with a girl again, and I was like, "Well, that was fun, still." So then it's been back and forth ever since. There are different things that I like about each of them.

As a result of this emerging awareness and the necessity of experience and personal insight, seventeen of the men reported they did not come to an understanding of their bisexual identity until their 20s. Their identity awareness was also complicated by the fact that interviewees knew few (if any) other bisexual men, especially while in their developmental years, who could offer advice, provide mentorship, or assert that bisexuality was a possible sexual orientation. Although many participants may have had experiences with women and developed a heterosexual self-schema, exploring attractions

to men seemed to begin a process of forming an additional set of scripts for romantic and sexual behavior and attitudes.

In sum, The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction described the participants' gradual awareness, through experience, that they were attracted to both men and women. Eighteen participants described being first conscious of their attraction to women and explained that their first sexual and romantic experiences grew from this attraction. Gradually, in their late adolescence or early 20s, interviewees recounted they began to explore their attractions to other men. Seventeen participants stated that they did not come to identify as bisexual until their 20s.

Overview of the Grounded Theory Models for Gay and Bisexual Men's Self-schema

As men acquire a sense of their sexuality, they do so in the context of their interaction with the social world, resulting in the instillation of behaviors and attitudes relating to their sexual self-schema. The following are the grounded theory models resulting from this analysis, conceptualizing the components of socialized male homosexuality and bisexuality. Finally, a conceptual model of a male sexual self-schema is described that incorporates the data from all participants.

The data from this study constituted seven interconnected themes for gay men, as well as nine themes for bisexual men. Gay and bisexual men also described processes by which their sexual self-schema changed over time. As described above, these topics resulted from elements of socialization that are projected onto a man's sexuality from its development in adolescence and possibly before. The following models visually

represent how these themes and processes interact. The first two models conceptualize themes, and are titled the Model of Sexual Self-schemas of Gay Men, and the Model of Sexual Self-schemas of Bisexual Men. The next two models outline processes, and are titled Model of The Process of Gay Sexual Self-schema Transition, Model of The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction. Finally, the overarching Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema is described.

The seven themes that are detailed in the Results chapter for gay men described schemas involved two relationships: interactions with men and men's own intrapersonal relationship. Bisexual men in the study described three relationships: interactions with other men, interactions with women, and men's own intrapersonal relationship. It follows that these models, in order to illustrate these themes according to the relationship in which they play out, is formed by circles, with each circle representing one of these unique relationships. Each circle has a title above it indicating the relationship it represents (including a circle for men's relationships with men, their relationships with themselves, and, in the case of bisexual men, their relationships with women).

In the first two conceptual models of the themes that follow, the themes described for gay men's and bisexual men's sexuality are assigned to at least one, and in some cases two, of the circles representing a relationship. The placement of each theme into the circles not only delineates the relationship context under which the theme plays out, but also illustrates the function and influence of each schema. In the cases where a theme is assigned to two circles, there is explanation of how one theme affects two relationships. For example, the Commitment and Work theme described by gay interviewees affected not only how a man viewed his own emotions, but also how he interacted with other men

in sharing them. Thus, this theme is shared between the two circles, indicating how the

theme affects a man's relationship with men, but also his relationship with himself.

I will describe the relationships in the order they are listed in the model (illustrated in

Figure 2), moving from left to right. In the gay model, I will describe first the schemas

guiding men's relationships with other men, then those involved in his personal

relationship. For the bisexual men's model, I will describe schemas guiding men's

relationships with men, then those in his intrapersonal relationship, and finally those

schemas that influence his relationships with women. I will explain how the schemas

have been assigned to each of the relationship circles. Finally, I will describe how the

schemas interact.

Relationships With Men   **Relationship With Self**

Physically
Attractive Men

Sex and
Emotion

Competition
for Men

Managing Sex
and Social
Perception

Commitment and
Work

Internalized
Homonegativity
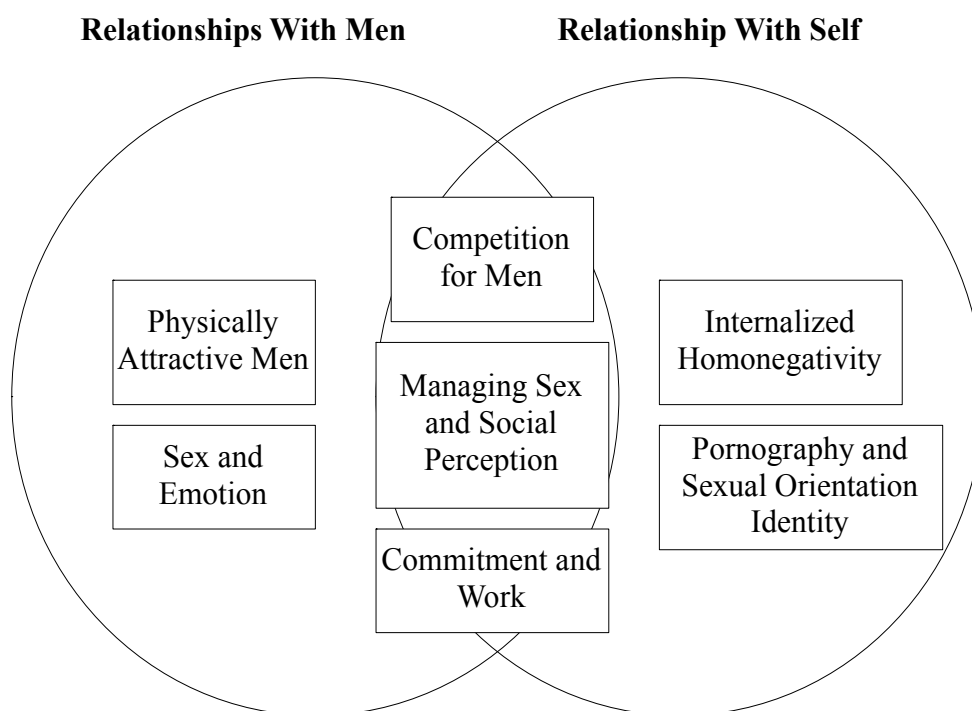
Pornography and
Sexual Orientation
Identity

Figure 2. Model of Sexual Self-schemas of Gay Men

Next, the conceptual process models will be outlined. The processes described for bisexual and gay male sexuality delineates the elements of one's sexual self-schema that change over time and how this process of development occurs. I will describe the relationships of the schemas of developmental process in the order they are listed in the model, moving from left to right. In the gay model, I will describe first the development of sexual orientation identity. For the bisexual men's model, I will describe schemas guiding men's growing awareness of bisexual attraction. I will explain how the schemas progress and how the schemas interact.

Finally, the data from all participants will be described as an overarching Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema. This model categorized the themes of each of the three sexual orientation groups in order to reveal sexual self-schemas common to interviewees across sexual orientation identity. Themes unique to each of the three groups are also outlined.

Model of Sexual Self-schemas of Gay Men

Relationships with Men

The first figure in the Model of Sexual Self-schemas of Gay Men is Men's Relationship with men. First, I will discuss the themes that are unique components of the Relationships with Men schema. The Physically Attractive Men theme of this study described the significant focus on attractiveness in the gay community, as well as what elements make up attraction. This theme detailed the positive and negative assumptions interviewees made about attractive men. The Sex and Emotion theme, or men's bifurcation of physical and emotional intimacy, is also at play in relationships with men.

There are three themes that are shared with men's sexual self-identity, because other men are a major influence on their intrapersonal relationships. First, as featured in the Competition for Attractive Men theme, gay men compete with one another for the attention of the most attractive men, and these competition experiences in turn shape their appraisal of their own social power and attractiveness. Second, gay men compromise in order to manage others' perceptions of them, as described by the Managing Sex and Social Perception topic. Finally, the Commitment and Work theme is also crossed with the Relationship with Self-schema because of the shift in a man's intrapersonal relationship that has been encouraged by his relationships with men. This included a commitment to the long-term future of the relationship, as well as working out relationship challenges.

In conclusion, the Relationships with Men schema has as unique factors the Physically Attractive Men theme, as well as the Sex and Emotion topic. Competition for Attractive Men, Managing Sex and Social Perception, and Commitment and Work are shared with the Relationship with Self-schema because these themes involve the way men are taught to view themselves. It was through their relationships with men that gay men extended or reconstructed their sexual self-schema.

Relationship with Self

The second circle in the dyad is a man's Relationship with Self. First, I will outline themes that are unique components of the Relationships with Men schema. Relationship with Self is characterized by gay men's own sense of sexual orientation identity, as was shaped by Internalized Homonegativity. This theme was influenced by

their cultural backgrounds and heteromasculine norms, and was tied to traditional, masculine behavior. Gay men's sexual identities were also influenced by pornography, as described in the Pornography and Sexual Orientation Identity theme. All gay men in the study reported using pornography, the centrality of pornography in learning gay sexual norms, and the difference between "real life" and sex as represented in pornography.

Next, I will place in context elements of the Relationship with Self theme that are shared with the Relationship with Men schema. As mentioned above, the Relationship with Self schema shares the Competition for Attractive Men theme with the Relationships with Men schema. Having an attractive partner provides access to social power. Men compete with one another for the most attractive men, and they may also employ games in order to maintain power. Being successful in attaining the interest of attractive men also played a key role in maintaining a positive sense of self-worth.

As described above, the Relationship with Self circle shared the Managing Sex and Social Perception theme with Relationships with Men. Men described behaving in a way that does not hurt other men's feelings or gives others the impression that you are promiscuous. Participants did not talk openly with other men about their sexual experiences or explicitly discuss being attracted to other men.

Finally, the Commitment and Work topic was shared between the two schema circles. Men described that their relationships were enduring and satisfying as they committed to their relationships and continued to work on them, despite the difficulties that arose. This led to men exploring and developing their own intrapersonal relationships and decreasing their participation in gay culture.

In sum, the Relationship with Self schema includes how identity is formed through pornographic representations of sex and gay relationships. One's self-relationship is also affected by internalized homonegativity and one's perception of men who do not espouse traditional gender performance. Finally, in conjunction with other men, men compete for the attention of attractive men, manage the opinions of others, and also may achieve commitment and make sustained effort toward lasting relationships.

Model of Sexual Self-schemas of Bisexual Men

Relationships with Men

The first figure in the Model of Sexual Self-schemas of Bisexual Men is Relationship with Men (Figure 3). First, I will discuss the themes that are unique components of the Relationships with Men schema. Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men described bisexual men's experience of reluctance on the part of men to be expressive, as well as how other men frequently substitute emotional intimacy with physical intimacy. Covert Sexualizing of Men's Bodies, or not openly discussing one's sexual thoughts, activities, or preferences with peers, was also at play in men's relationships with other men.

One theme related to bisexual men's relationships with men was shared with the Relationship with Self-schema. The Physical Appearance is Important to Men who are Attracted to Men theme of this study described the significant focus on attractiveness among men. This theme detailed that physical appearance is especially important to men. Men compete with one another for the attention of the most attractive men, and these

Relationship With Self

Anxieties about Long-Term Relationships

Physical Appearance is Important to Men Who Are Attracted to Men

Belief That Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality

Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men

Disproportionate Attraction

Importance of Emotional Connection

Covert Sexualizing of Men's Bodies

Finding the "Right Person"

Overt Sexualizing of Women's Bodies

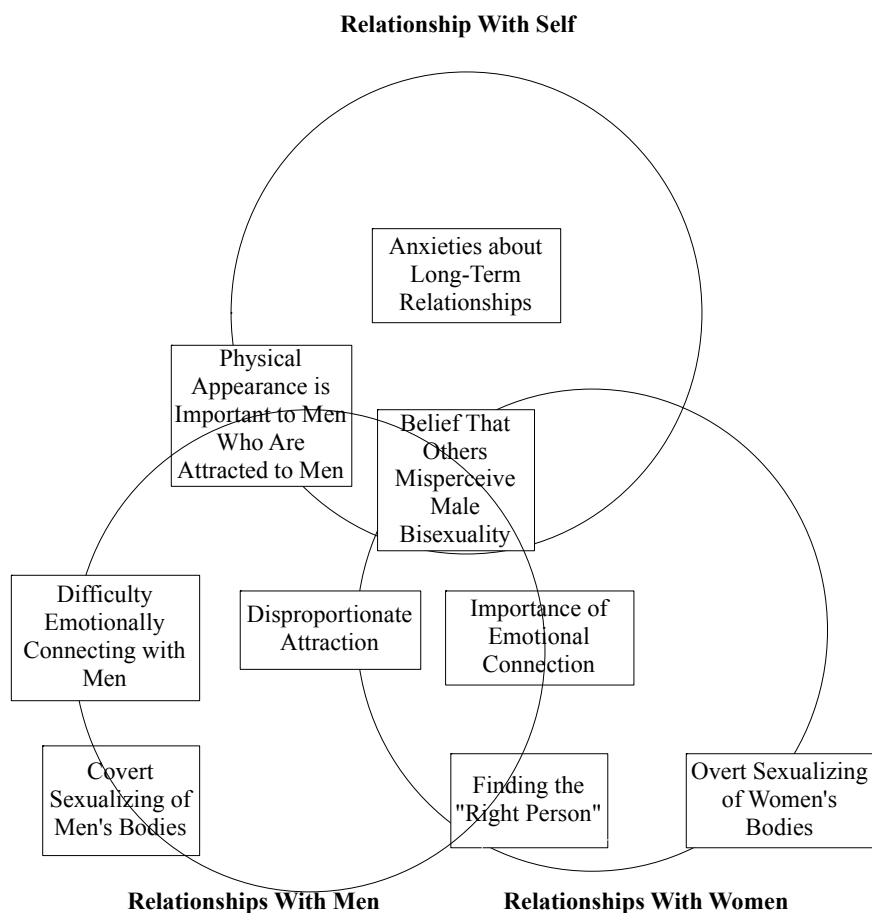**Relationships With Men**   **Relationships With Women**

Figure 3. Model of Sexual Self-schemas of Bisexual Men

competition experiences in turn shape their appraisal of their own social power,

attractiveness, and opportunities for nonrelational sex.

There are three themes that are shared between Relationships with Men and

Relationships with Women, because bisexual men valued each of these components in

both male and female partners. First, as featured in the Disproportionate Attraction

theme, interviewees were often more attracted to men, to women, or in some cases,

equally attracted to both sexes. This theme described trends unique to men of these

various categories. Second, The Importance of Emotional Connection theme underlined

the importance bisexual men placed on emotional expressiveness, on emotional connection in sex, and on their preference for monogamy. Finally, Finding the Right Person summarized bisexual men's comments about finding a partner with whom they had a deep connection in order to overcome their own anxieties about relationships as well as public misconceptions about them.

Additionally, there was a theme that was shared by Men's Relationships with Men, Relationships with Women, and Relationship with Self. Belief That Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality described bisexual men's belief that there were biases held by men and women against bisexual men. These also included internalization of some of these beliefs, such as their inability to be monogamous, and feeling that they had to assert their personal integrity to overcome in order to establish long-term relationships

In conclusion, the Relationships with Men schema shared five themes with other schemas and had two unique factors. Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men and Covert Sexualizing of Men's Bodies characterized bisexual men's Relationships with Men. The Physical Appearance is Important to Men Who Are Attracted to Other Men factor was shared with the Relationship with Self theme. Disproportionate Attraction, The Importance of Emotion, and Finding the Right Person are shared with the Relationship with Women schema, because these themes involved the way men view relationships with both men and women. The theme Others' Misperceptions about Male Bisexuality was shared by all three relationship circles, because it encompassed relationships with women, men, and also beliefs about self.

Relationship with Self

The second circle in the dyad is bisexual men's Relationship with Self. First, I will outline the theme that is unique to the Relationships with Self-schema. Relationship with Self is characterized by Anxieties about Long-Term Relationships. This theme was influenced by sociopolitical costs of relationships with men, avoidance of acting outside masculinity norms, and fear they would not be satisfied in a monogamous relationship.

Next, I will place in context elements of the Relationship with Self theme that are shared with the Relationship with Men schema. As mentioned above, the Relationship with Self schema shares the Physical Appearance is Important to Men Who Are Attracted to Men theme with the Relationships with Men schema. Men compete with one another for the most attractive men and also feel other men are scrutinizing of their appearance. Being successful in attaining the interest of attractive men also led to casual sex and social validation.

As described above, the Relationship with Self circle also shared the theme Belief That Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality with Relationships with Men and Relationships with Women. Men described a sense that both men and women saw them as confused, hiding a gay sexual orientation, and incapable of monogamy. Participants felt this reflected poorly on them, had a tendency to internalize some of these prejudiced beliefs, and felt their integrity needed to be established in order to form healthy relationships.

In sum, the Relationship with Self schema includes how anxieties about long-term relationships form sexual orientation identity. One's self-relationship is also affected by the belief that others' perception of bisexual men is skewed. Finally, in conjunction with

other men, men compete for the attention of attractive men and must be attractive themselves in order to be competitive.

Relationships with Women

The final figure in the Model of Sexual Self-schemas of Bisexual Men is Relationships with Women. First, I will discuss the theme that is unique to the Relationships with Women schema. Overt Sexualizing of Women's Bodies summarized interviewees' comments about viewing and sexually fantasizing about women's bodies alone and with peers. Participants said that sexualizing female bodies and discussing these thoughts was an explicit element of their sexual behavior and attitudes.

This element of the model shared three themes with Relationships with Men. The Disproportionate Attraction theme described elements of attraction to women that were unique for bisexual men. Second, The Importance of Emotional Connection theme underlined the importance of bisexual men's bias that women were more willing to be emotionally connected and monogamous in a relationship. Finally, Finding the Right Person summarized bisexual men's comments that finding a compatible partner was more important than the person's sex.

Additionally, Belief That Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality was shared by all three themes. This theme described bisexual men's belief that there were biases held by men and women against bisexual men. These included the belief that women were uncomfortable with the idea of dating a man who had had sex with other men out of fear that he was concealing a true gay sexual orientation or would not be able to maintain monogamy.

In conclusion, the Relationships with Women schema shared four themes with other schemas. The Belief That Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality theme was shared with the other two themes. Disproportionate Attraction, The Importance of Emotion and Finding the Right Person are shared with the Relationship with Men schema, because these themes involve the way men view relationships with both men and women. There was one unique theme, Overt Sexualizing of Women's Bodies, that illustrated the centrality of objectifying women to this self-schema.

Summary of the Grounded Theory Models of Sexual Self-schemas

of Gay and Bisexual Men

The Models of Sexual Self-schemas of Gay and Bisexual Men were described above. The Sexual Self-schema of Gay Men was conceptualized in terms of two relationships. These included Men's Relationships with Men and Relationship with Self. The eight themes that emerged from the study were situated between these two relationships in order to illustrate their interrelationships and effects. The Sexual Self-schema of Bisexual Men was illustrated in terms of three relationships. These included Men's Relationships with Men, Men's Relationships with Women, and Relationship with Self. The nine themes that emerged from the study were also situated among these three relationships.

Model of The Process of Gay Sexual Self-schema Transition

The Process of Gay Sexual Self-schema Transition (Figure 4) summed

participants' experiences with changes to their sexual self-schemas over time. This

process underscores the importance of considering the dynamic and developmental

processes through which sexual self-schemas operate. Examining gay men's sexual self-

schema transition over time, three levels of elements need to be considered: (a)

experiential factors, or key experiences, such as the first relationship; (b) *cultural*

influences, such as social acceptance of gay relationships; and (c) *developmental*

outcomes, which refer to how a gay man sees his own growth playing a role in a long-

term relationship. This organization demonstrates that the effects of experience are

moderated by culture and cumulate into identity. To give a specific example, participants

often described going through a period of promiscuity, during which time they had a high
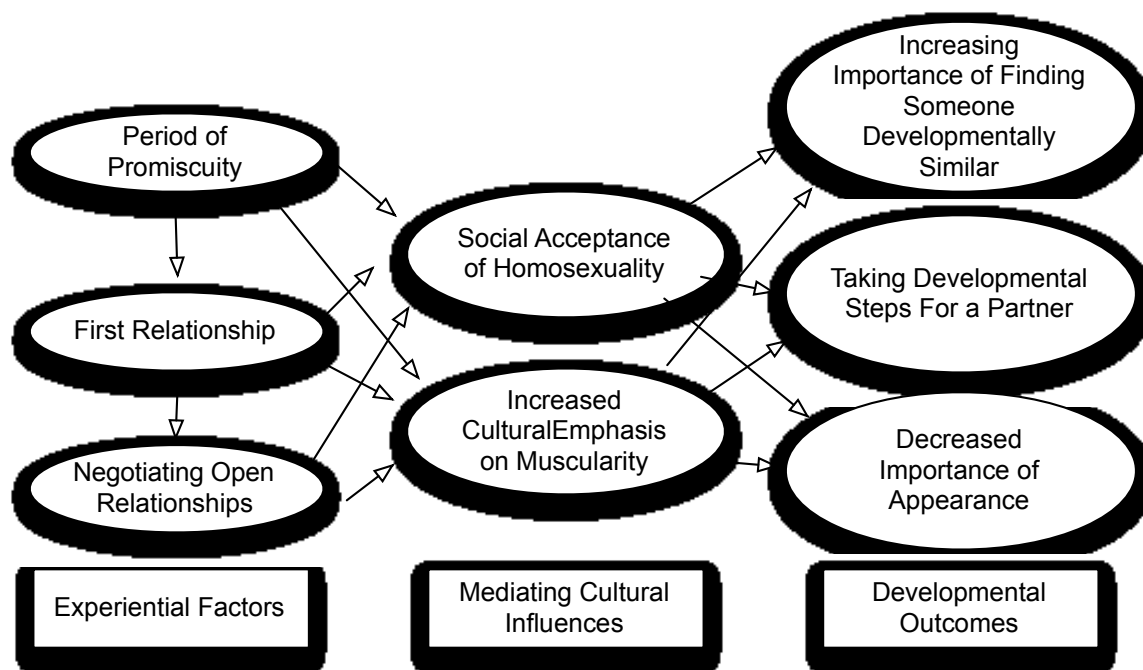

Figure 4. The Process of Gay Sexual Self-schema Transition

frequency of sexual activity with the most desirable partners. They were taught culturally, though media and by peers, that muscular men were highly desirable. With further experience, they developed a desire to have a long-term relationship; and, with relationship experience, they found they were most compatible with other men who were in a similar developmental stage.

Three experiential factors were named by participants as shifting their concept of dating and relationships. The first was a period of promiscuity, or a phase following coming out during which one begins to form gay identity, discovers sexual and relational preferences, and begins to understand the emotional element of sex. Following this period of experimentation, participants entered into their first relationships. During this phase, participants determined appropriate relationship behavior, clarified their preferences in a potential partner, and discovered how their own personal development may shape a relationship. Finally, participants discussed the decision to have an open or monogamous relationship as a key hallmark in one's relationship development.

These experiential phases were moderated by cultural influences. Participants felt an increasing emphasis on muscularity within the gay community. This focus on muscularity guided their choice of partners during the period of promiscuity, their first relationship partners, as well as their extra-relational partners should they negotiate an open relationship. Participants also discussed how feeling acceptance of their gay sexual orientation identity from social and cultural sources helped them feel greater acceptance of themselves and affected their relationships. According to interviewees, social acceptance mediated the period of promiscuity through increased facility in meeting one another than during other eras of history. Participants believed they were able to explore

their first romantic and sexual experiences with less shame than during other time periods when homosexuality was less visible or accepted. Social acceptance mediated their first relationship experiences according to the recognition their families or communities accorded their romantic partners. Finally, social acceptance affected the lack of focus in gay culture on monogamous coupling, including lack of legal rights to marry, as well as a cultural difference in the role of sex and norms surrounding long-term relationships.

How interviewees progressed in their own personal development was strongly influenced by their experiences and cultural influences. Despite an increased cultural emphasis on muscularity, with time and relationship experiences, interviewees felt appearance did not play as significant a role in decisions regarding dating. They also felt the need to find others to date who had also determined that appearance considerations were subordinate to overall compatibility. With time and experience, participants were also willing to confront their focus on appearance, including a need to adhere to stringent masculine physical presentation in order to overcome internalized sexual prejudice. Social acceptance also affected how participants progressed in terms of finding someone who had a similar acceptance of gay identity, or progressing through these steps in order to find harmony with a partner. As mentioned by interviewees, developmental steps affected by social acceptance included deemphasizing physical appearance, choosing a long-term relationship partner based on mutual compatibility rather than hegemonic gay cultural standards, resolving homonegativity, investing fully into a committed relationship, reconciling gay identity issues, finding peace with family relationships, and resolving anger.

In conclusion, the Process of Gay Sexual Self-schema Transition was organized according to experiential factors, mediating cultural influences, and developmental outcomes. Experiences that shaped one's sexual self-schema were going through a period of promiscuity, having one's first relationship, and the eventual negotiation of an open relationship. Culturally, one's identity development was affected by an increased emphasis on muscularity and social acceptance of gay sexual orientation identity and gay relationships. Finally, experiences and cultural factors had bearing on developmental phases, including a decreased importance of appearance, the increased importance of finding a long-term partner who is developmentally similar to oneself, and also taking developmental steps in order to make a long-term relationship more stable and healthy.

Model of the Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction

The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction (Figure 5) described how bisexual interviewees grew to understand their sexual orientation identity through
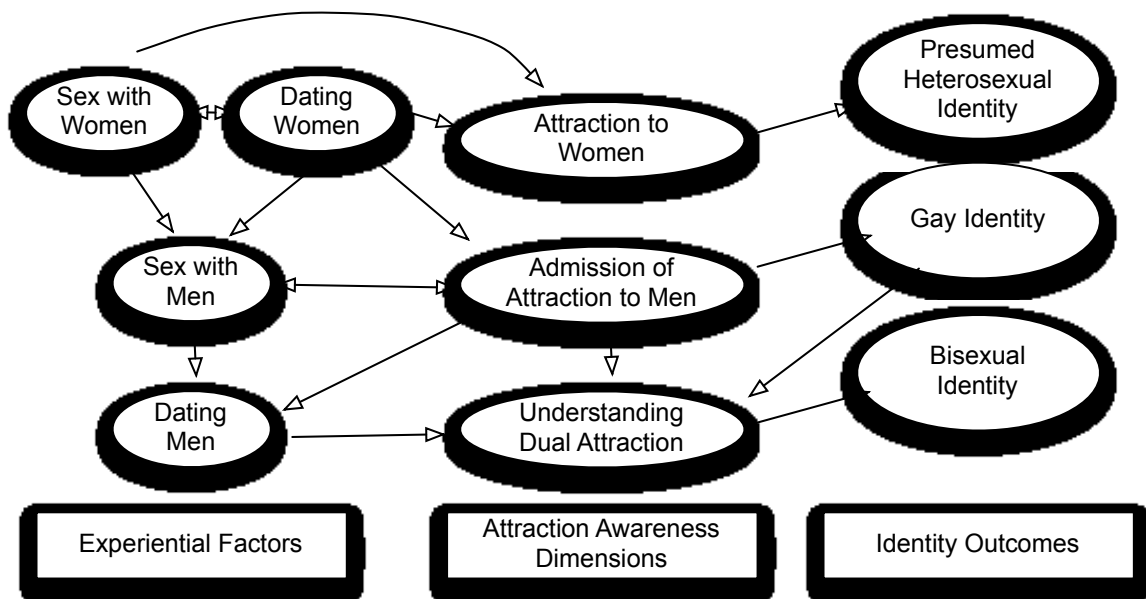
Figure 5. The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction

time and experience. Examining events and moments of awareness that shaped their sexual self-schemas, three levels of elements need to be considered: (a) experiential factors, or key incidents, such as sexual or romantic experiences, (b) dimensions of awareness, or how interviewees behaved according to their self understanding, and (c) identity outcomes, or they way they labeled their sexual orientation identity. To give a specific example, participants described having their first sexual and romantic experiences with women in part because they followed cultural developmental norms that encouraged age-appropriate exploration of their attractions to women. During this period of time, they presumed they were heterosexual. With further experience, they developed an understanding of dual attractions, which resulted in a decided bisexual sexual orientation identity.

The experiences mentioned by interviewees as shaping their awareness of attractions were sex and relationships with women, followed by sex and relationships with men. Participants described having sex and/or romantic relationships first with women. Participants did not describe one happening before the other, but often happening simultaneously. Eventually in late adolescence or their early 20s, they had sexual encounters with men first, followed by romantic relationships with men.

Interviewees progressed in their sexual behavior according to their levels of insight into their attractions. Participants followed cultural norms that encouraged them to pursue women for dating and sex, which also coincided with an existing attraction to women. However, at some point prior to or following a sexual experience with a man, participants said they realized, or allowed themselves to admit, that they were attracted to men. This resulted in confusion about their sexual identities as they became aware of

their attractions. Participants said that, following this admission, they had additional sexual experiences with men, romantic experiences with men, and also ongoing romantic and sexual experiences with women. This led to an eventual understanding of their dual attraction.

Most bisexual men interviewed for this study initially presumed their sexual orientation identity was heterosexual. Following sex with men and acknowledging their attraction to men, most interviewees understood themselves in terms of a bisexual sexual orientation. However, 7 interviewees believed their attraction to men indicated a gay sexual orientation identity. Following ongoing sexual and romantic experiences with women and men, they eventually came to an understanding of their dual attractions and assumed a bisexual sexual orientation identity label.

In conclusion, the Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction schema was organized according to experiential factors, dimensions of awareness, and identity outcomes. Experiences that shaped their sexual self-schemas were sexual and romantic experiences with men and women. Initially, interviewees were only aware of their attraction to women, but they eventually realized they were also attracted to men and finally arrived at an understanding they were attracted to both men and women. Finally, experiences and awareness had bearing on identity, transitioning first from presuming one was heterosexual, occasionally then believing that attraction to other men indicated homosexuality, and finally transitioning to a bisexual sexual orientation identity.

Summary of Gay and Bisexual Men's Sexual Self-schema

Processes Grounded Theory Models

The Models of The Process of Sexual Orientation Development and The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction were described above. The Process of Gay Sexual Self-schema Transition was conceptualized in terms of three elements, including experimental factors, mediating cultural influences, and developmental outcomes. The processes that emerged from the study were situated between these three categories in order to illustrate their interrelationships and effects. The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction was illustrated in terms of three elements. These included experiences, dimensions of awareness, and identity. The processes that emerged from the study were also situated among these three categories. In the next chapter I will discuss the significance of these findings in the context of what is already known about gay and bisexual men's sexual self-schemas.
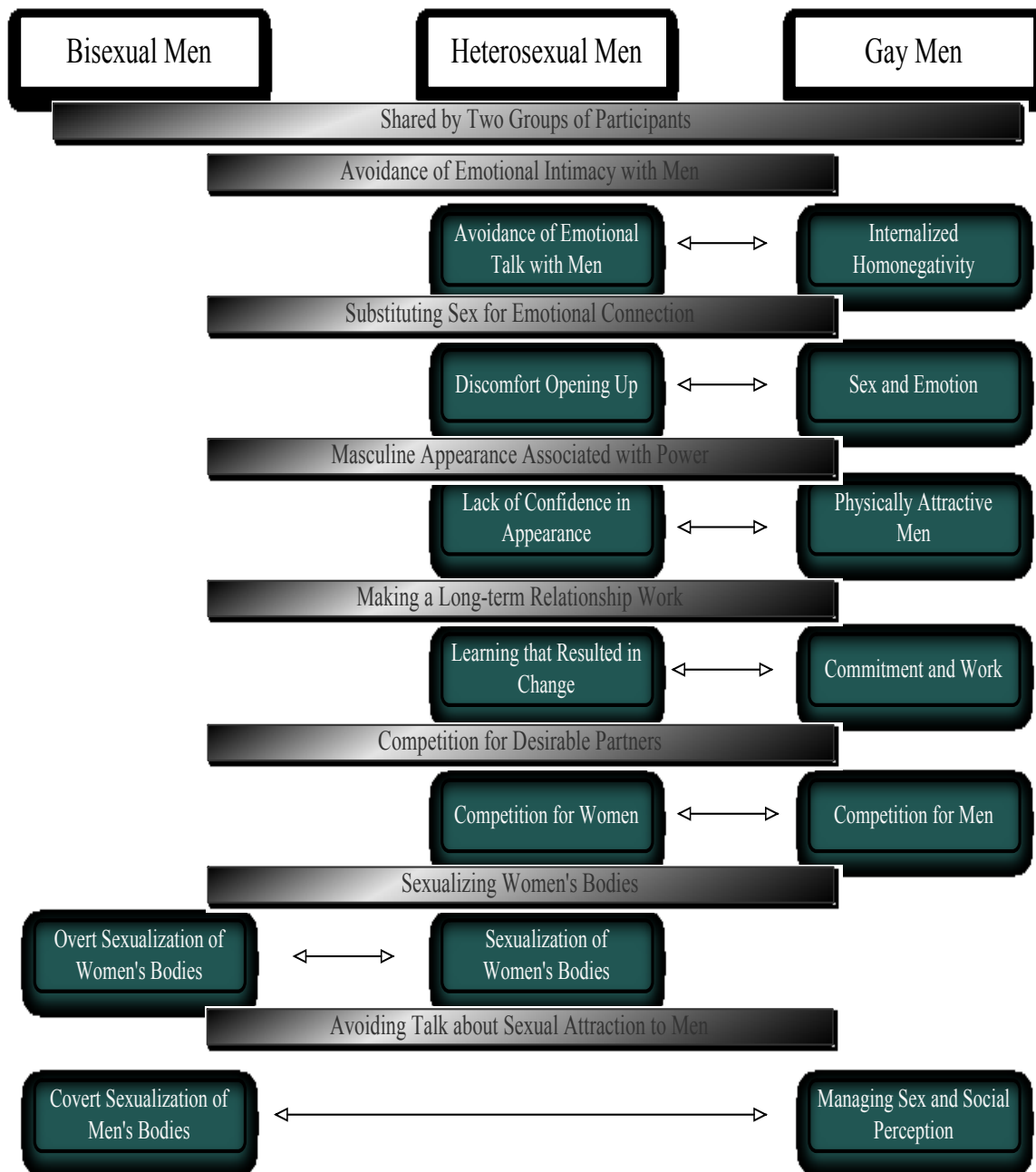
Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema

Although there are distinctive components to each of the themes described in this study and the prior one (on heterosexual men's self-schemas) by men of differing sexual orientations, there were also elements that were mutual to these themes across interviewees of differing sexual orientations. The data from this study constituted five topics that have overlapping elements among the gay and heterosexual participant groups, one topic that has overlap among the bisexual and gay groups, and one topic that has common elements among the bisexual and heterosexual groups. There were also seven themes that were unique to the bisexual group, two themes unique to the heterosexual

group, and one theme unique to the gay group. These overarching and unique topics constitute a comprehensive description of how masculinity affects men's understanding of romantic and sexual relationships. The following model visually represents the commonalities and also the distinct elements of each cohort. The model formed by these themes is titled the Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema.

It follows that this model (illustrated in Figure 6), in order to illustrate commonalities and unique elements of the schemas in which they play out, is organized into two sections according to seven overarching topics and 10 unique themes. First, five topics formed by themes common to the gay and heterosexual groups are described, as well as one topic formed by themes common to gay and bisexual participants, and one topic formed by themes common to bisexual and heterosexual participants. Finally, 10 themes unique to each cohort are explained. For the first section, each topic has a title indicating the commonality, and below are listed the two themes that are contained in each topic. For example, the Commitment and Emotional Intimacy Lead to Lasting Relationships topic contains themes from the gay and heterosexual cohorts. The topic was described by heterosexual men in the Learning that Resulted in Change theme and gay men in the Commitment and Work theme. Thus, this theme is listed in the first section, indicating it was common to two groups of interviewees.

I will describe the topics in the order they are listed in the model (illustrated in Figure 4), moving from top to bottom. I will describe the commonalities among themes moving from left to right. I will describe first the topics common to two groups of interviewees. Next I will describe themes that were exclusive to one of the three groups.

Bisexual Men	Heterosexual Men	Gay Men

Shared by Two Groups of Participants

Avoidance of Emotional Intimacy with Men

Avoidance of Emotional Talk with Men	⟷	Internalized Homonegativity

Substituting Sex for Emotional Connection

Discomfort Opening Up	⟷	Sex and Emotion

Masculine Appearance Associated with Power

Lack of Confidence in Appearance	⟷	Physically Attractive Men

Making a Long-term Relationship Work

Learning that Resulted in Change	⟷	Commitment and Work

Competition for Desirable Partners

Competition for Women	⟷	Competition for Men

Sexualizing Women's Bodies

Overt Sexualization of Women's Bodies	⟷	Sexualization of Women's Bodies

Avoiding Talk about Sexual Attraction to Men

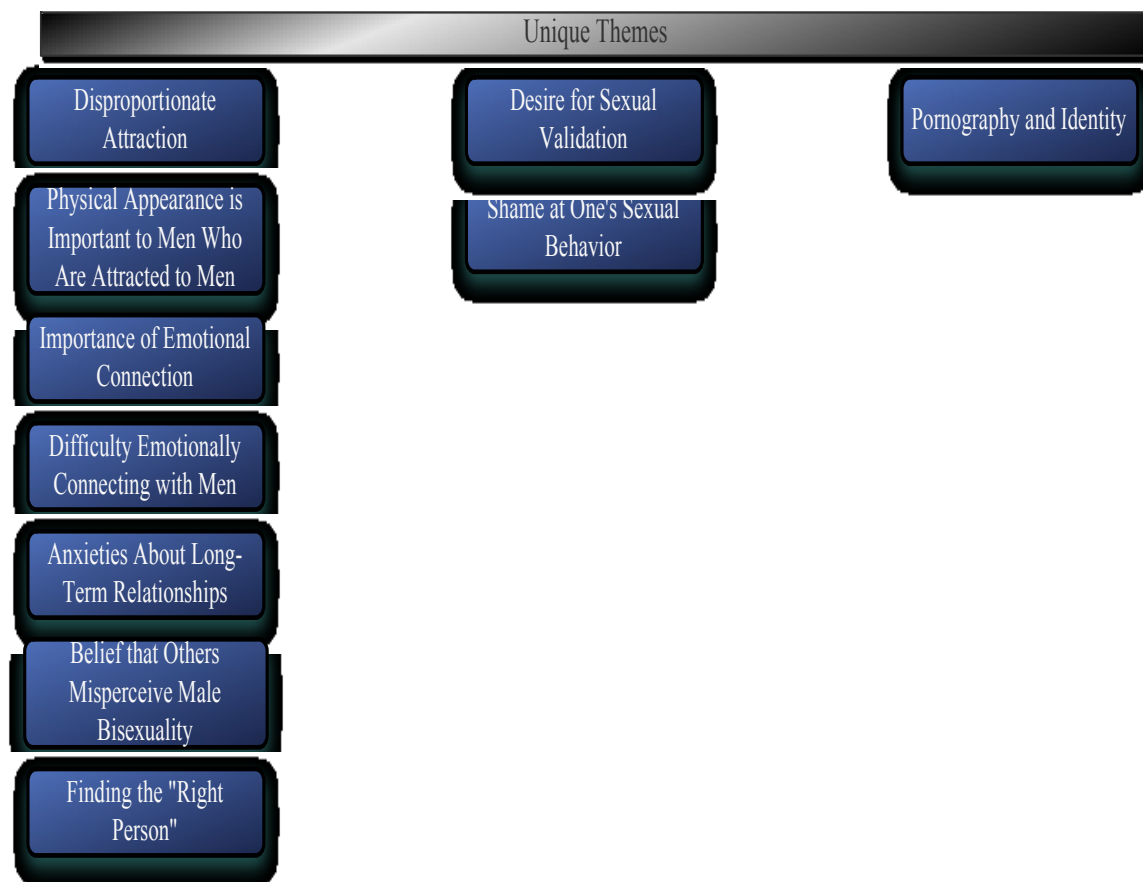| Covert Sexualization of Men's Bodies	⟷	Managing Sex and Social Perception

Figure 5. Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema

Overarching Topics

Avoidance of Emotional Intimacy with Men

  The first topic in the Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema is Avoidance of Emotional Intimacy with Other Men. This included heterosexual men's sexual self-schema, Avoidance of Emotional Talk with Men. Sixteen heterosexual men discussed discomfort discussing their emotions with other men. There was more vulnerability, fear of rejection, and fear of being mocked for acting in a feminine way for talking about one's feelings and emotional life. Emotional talk was equated with sexual desire for other men, and men avoided emotional talk in order to avoid being perceived as gay.

Sixteen gay men discussed Avoidance of Emotional Intimacy with Other Men in the Internalized Homonegativity theme. Avoiding emotional intimacy was seen as something especially common to men who were not out as gay and to men of some multicultural backgrounds who were uninterested in committed relationships and were embarrassed to be perceived as having affection for men. Gay participants explained that, because of pressure to appear masculine, they avoided the appearance of feminine traits, including demonstrating empathy, compromise, and generosity. In order to calm anxiety caused by violating norms of emotional expression with men, gay men may become involved in relationships prematurely in order to gain social support.

Bisexual men are not included in this topic because interviewees emphasized their desire to emotionally connect with their partners. In the theme Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men, bisexual interviewees described that despite this desire, emotional expression was often difficult and avoided by other men. They recounted sociopolitical pressures that encouraged other men to ignore their desire to be emotionally intimate with men. They also did not view emotional connection as integral to sex with men.

In conclusion, the Avoidance of Emotional Intimacy with Men topic outlined 32 heterosexual and gay interviewees' socialized sense that they should not be emotionally intimate with other men. This topic included the heterosexual participants' theme Avoidance of Emotional Talk with Men, and the Internalized Homonegativity theme discussed by the gay interviewees. Participants' avoidance of feminine traits included evading demonstration of emotional care for and desire for connection with other men and the difficulty of establishing this intimacy.

Substitution of Sex for Emotional Connection

The second topic in the Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema is Substitution of Sex for Emotional Connection. Fifteen heterosexual men in the Discomfort Opening Up theme described this topic. They recounted that being emotionally vulnerable was equated with losing control and appearing less masculine. Participants distinguished between physical and emotional intimacy and indicated that physical intimacy was a less "risky" and a "faster fix." Emotional relationships became unfamiliar to them, and they remarked that they could not have feelings for a woman without first having sex with her.

Eighteen gay interviewees discussed their ability to dichotomize sex and emotional connection in the Sex and Emotion theme. Vulnerability was believed to underlie verbal self-disclosure. Sex might be substituted for emotional expression, because physical intimacy opened one up to less possible emotional hurt. Gay participants disclosed that they had nonrelational sex in order to feel a level of intimacy while avoiding the possibility of emotional neediness or pain. Having nonrelational sex was described as a way of coping with emotional difficulties and getting to know others.

Bisexual participants were not included in this topic, because bisexual men expressed interest in emotionally connecting with others during sex. Although almost all of the bisexual participants had unemotional, nonrelational sex with men, they explained that this was due to the fact that men they met engaged in sex rather than emotional disclosure, as described in the Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men theme. Because of men's reluctance to be expressive, intimacy was occasionally limited to physical connection.

In conclusion, 33 gay and heterosexual interviewees described the Substituting Sex for Emotional Connection topic. This included heterosexual participants' description of Discomfort "Opening Up" and gay interviewees' recounting a dichotomy between Sex and Emotion. This theme related men's sense that they could avoid the risks of vulnerability they felt were inherent in emotional disclosure with physical intimacy.

Masculine Appearance Associated with Power

The third topic in the Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema is Masculine Appearance Associated with Power. Fifteen heterosexual men in the Lack of Confidence in Appearance theme described this topic. These men expressed a lack of confidence in the appearance of their own bodies, especially as compared to the bodies of men in the media. They felt their bodies should be muscular, large, and that they should be self-assured about their appeal to women. Feelings of physical inferiority affected their sexual confidence. Men of color indicated that White men were seen as most attractive.

All gay participants described that being attractive was a form of social power. One's level of attractiveness indicated the potential to find a desirable sex partner, to receive social attention, to gain access to occupational advantages, and to have "good sex." Gay men also described this desirable appearance as being traditionally masculine and muscular, with a self-assured gait, a traditionally male style of dress, and no feminine mannerisms. Again, White men were seen as being most attractive.

Bisexual participants were not included in this theme. In the Physical Appearance is Important to Men Who Are Attracted to Men theme, 16 bisexual men said that they themselves did not place a high value on physical attractiveness. They did perceive,

however, that other men were much more critical about physical appearance than women and that other men made decisions to pursue or not pursue them based on their level of attractiveness. Bisexual men reported equal attraction to White men and men of color.

In sum, the Masculine Appearance Associated with Power topic included 35 gay and heterosexual men's descriptions of the importance of having an attractive appearance. This included the heterosexual men's theme, Lack of Confidence in Appearance, and gay men's theme, Physically Attractive Men. A physical body that indicated masculine gender identity was an essential element to the sexual self-schema, including muscular definition. White men's physical features were viewed as most attractive. Being attractive indicated the potential to be the most desirable sex partner and access to social power.

Making a Long-term Relationship Work

The fourth topic in the Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema is Making a Long-term Relationship Work. Twelve heterosexual men said that, with time and experience, they learned to connect emotionally with women. In the Learning That Resulted in Change theme, participants attributed this increased awareness and communication to learning expressiveness from their female partners.

Eight gay men said that long-lasting and satisfying relationships involved a commitment to their relationship, of simply staying together despite difficulty, while putting forth continual effort into resolving challenges. In the Commitment and Work theme, they described accepting their partners' unique personality traits. They described

learning to communicate sensitive feelings and focus on self-improvement that furthered emotional intimacy, such as controlling anger and learning to negotiate.

Bisexual interviewees were not included in this because they did not experience a parallel learning of emotional expressiveness. As described in the Finding the "Right Person" theme, bisexual men cited finding an individual whose character was compatible to their own as the key to a lasting relationship. These interviewees believed that having a deep emotional connection would lead them to commit to a long-term relationship and remain committed despite difficulties.

In summary, the Making a Long-term Relationship Work included 20 heterosexual and gay men's descriptions about how learning to emotionally communicate with their partner led to lasting, satisfying relationships. This topic included the heterosexual interviewees' theme, Learning that Resulted in Change, and the gay cohort's theme, Commitment and Work. Gay and heterosexual men explained that making their relationships endure despite difficulty meant learning to introspect and become more self-aware, while deepening their transparency about their own feelings.

Competition for Desirable Partners

The fifth topic in the Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema is Competition for Desirable Partners. This included the heterosexual men's theme, Competition for Women. All heterosexual participants said they gained other men's respect by "scoring" with an attractive woman and by having frequent sex. Men often sought sexual attention from women for whom they did not feel romantic interest, because these women were most sought after by other men.

Likewise, all gay men described a Competition for Men theme. Gay men said that there was competition among men for the most attractive potential partners. Gay men received positive attention from gay peers for having an attractive partner. This is at least in part because having an attractive partner reflected positively on one's own attractiveness.

Bisexual interviewees were not included in this topic because they did not indicate a comparable level of interest in having an attractive partner. Because of their desire for emotional connection in their relationships, they emphasized getting to know a potential partner on an emotionally intimate level. They did not indicate a desire for peer attention or social power through nonrelational sex with the most desirable men and women.

In sum, Competition for Desirable Partners described all 40 heterosexual and gay participants' drive to find the most attractive partners for romantic and sexual relationships. Successful competition for attractive men and women led to social approval from peers. It included the heterosexual theme, Competition for Women, and the gay theme, Competition for Men.

Sexualizing Women's Bodies

The sixth topic in the Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema is Sexualizing Women's Bodies. Fourteen bisexual interviewees reported, in the Overt Sexualization of Women's Bodies theme that they looked at women's bodies alone and also discussed their observations and fantasies about women with peers. With heterosexual peers, talking about women's bodies bolstered friends. Interviewees said that they knew the

specific physical features their peers found attractive in women, and they had specific body parts they found attractive in women.

All heterosexual men reported in the Sexualization of Women's Bodies theme that they watched women's bodies both alone and with male peers. All heterosexual men reported having commented on women's bodies with other men, often in ways that included descriptions of hypothetical sexual acts with the woman being discussed. Participants frequently discussed women's bodies as a collection of sexually arousing body parts.

Gay men did not demonstrate a comparable sexualization of men's bodies. This was described in the Managing Sex and Social Perception theme as resulting from the desire to not appear promiscuous. Gay interviewees rarely discussed their sexual activities with others. Most gay men did not discuss having an attraction to a specific body part on other men's bodies, and mentioned that explicitly mentioning attraction to a man's body part may make one appear promiscuous.

In sum, the Sexualizing Women's Bodies topic included 34 bisexual and heterosexual men's descriptions of "looking at," "watching," "viewing," or "checking out" women's bodies alone and with peers. These participants indicated that they were especially attracted to one part of a woman's body and were able to see a woman's bodies as physical objects. This theme underlined the emotional detachment and false expectations of these interviewees.

Avoiding Talk About Sexual Attraction to Men

The seventh topic in the Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema is Avoiding Talk About Sexual Attraction to Men. All bisexual participants explained in the Covert Sexualization of Men's Bodies theme that, although they watched and had sexual fantasies about men's bodies, they did not talk about these observations or fantasies with peers. Participants believed that for heterosexual peers to hear that a man was attracted to other men highlighted their differing sexual orientation identity and harmed rapport. For gay peers, comments about attraction or fantasies might make one appear promiscuous.

Fifteen gay participants explained that gay men rarely discuss their sexual activities with other gay men unless they are close friends. Gay men did not discuss their sexual fantasies with other men, and they only made vague comments about men's bodies (for example, "he looks fit"). Most men said this was because more blatant comments about attraction, for example, discussing a specific body part that is found especially attractive, may make one appear promiscuous.

Heterosexual men did not have a parallel theme. In Sexualization of Women's Bodies, all heterosexual participants described "girl-watching" with peers. Interviewees discussed their preferences for specific parts of women's bodies, and were also familiar with their peers' preferences for women's bodies.

In conclusion, Avoiding Talk About Sexual Attraction to Men was mentioned by 35 bisexual and gay men. This included the bisexual theme, Covert Sexualization of Men's Bodies, and the gay theme, Managing Sex and Social Perception. This topic underlined the avoidance of discussing men's bodies, one's fantasies, or one's sexual activities for fear of being perceived as promiscuous.

Themes Unique to the Sexual Self-schema of Bisexual Men

Disproportionate Attraction

The first unique theme, Disproportionate Attraction, described fifteen bisexual men's greater attraction to either men or women, or equally to both. The majority of interviewees were more attracted to men. Although they stated they were more attracted to one sex over the other, they were occasionally attracted to someone of the non-dominant sex of attraction if that person was especially attractive to them.

Physical Appearance Is Important to Men Who Are Attracted to Men

In the second unique theme, sixteen bisexual interviewees described that, although they did not have a strong desire to have a physically attractive partner, they perceived that having the most attractive partner possible was very important to other men. In the Physical Appearance is Important to Men Who Are Attracted to Men theme, participants described a high level of competition with men for the attention of the most attractive men. This was attributed first to the fact that this was socially validating of one's own attractiveness and desirability, and secondly, because competition for the most attractive men could lead to nonrelational sex.

Importance of Emotional Connection

In the third theme unique to the Model of Male Sexual Self-schema, sixteen bisexual men described the importance interviewees placed on emotional expressiveness. They enjoyed discussing their internal lives with their partners. They also desired

monogamous relationships and preferred to have sex only when there was a high degree of emotional investment for both partners.

Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men

In the fourth theme unique to bisexual men, Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men, 12 participants reported that expressiveness was more difficult to mutually accomplish in relationships with other men. All participants said women were more emotionally expressive, more trustworthy, and more attentive to the emotional elements of physical intimacy. Participants said that they occasionally had sex with men because, for the men they dated, sex was a method of avoiding emotional disclosure while still having a sense of intimacy.

Anxieties About Long-term Relationships

In the fifth theme unique to bisexual men, Anxieties About Long-term Relationships, seventeen participants described their anxieties about long-term relationships. These were focused on the sociopolitical costs of relationships with men and the pressure to choose a female partner because of cultural and internalized heterosexism. Women were also seen as potentially more loyal as long-term partners, and participants feared men would be unfaithful. Participants also described the fear that they would not find satisfaction in a long-term, monogamous relationship.

Belief That Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality

In the sixth theme unique to bisexual men, Belief That Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality, 16 interviewees outlined the biases they believed others had against them as bisexual men that had to be overcome in establishing long-term relationships, including the sense that bisexual men were indecisive, or were actually gay men who were avoiding the sociopolitical costs of being identified as gay, or were at some point in developing a gay sexual orientation identity. Interviewees reported that this caused them to not be open about their sexual orientation identity with potential partners until they had established a certain amount of trust.

Finding the Right Partner

In the seventh theme unique to bisexual men, Finding the Right Partner, nine participants emphasized that the sex of a potential partner was not as important as finding someone whose character they found attractive. Finding the "right person" as a partner was seen as the solution to overcoming both societal heterosexism and fears that they would not be happy in a monogamous relationship. An individual whom the participants found compatible was also judged to be free of bias or preconceived judgment about male bisexuality.

Themes Unique to the Sexual Self-schema of Heterosexual Men

Desire for Sexual Validation

The first theme unique to heterosexual men was Desire for Sexual Validation. All heterosexual participants said that women had the power to validate men's masculine

self-worth through sexual attention. Failing to win a woman's sexual attention was described as reducing a man's sense of masculinity.

Shame at One's Sexual Behavior

The second theme unique to heterosexual men was Shame at One's Sexual Behavior. Nine heterosexual interviewees expressed some shame at their sexual relationships with women. The shame was a result of feeling they had misled women in order to get sex. To appear trustworthy, the participants would falsely indicate they were interest in a long-term relationship.

Theme Unique to Sexual Self-schemas of Gay Men

Pornography and Sexual Orientation Identity

The theme unique to the gay men interviewed in this study was Pornography and Identity. In sum, all interviewees described the relationship gay men have to pornography and how identity formation takes place in relationship to viewing these depictions of sex between men. Pornography was seen as a positive resource for learning about sex and gay culture, as well as an outlet for meeting one's sexual needs. Although pornography may depict a wide range of possible sexual activities, for some interviewees viewing pornography also created a false expectation of sexuality.

Summary of the Grounded Theory Model

of the Male Sexual Self-schema

The above Model of the Male Sexual Self-schema was described as a series of seven overarching themes, followed by 12 unique themes. The overarching themes included Avoiding Emotional Intimacy with Men, Substituting Sex for Emotional Connection, Masculine Appearance Associated with Power, Making a Long-Term Relationship Work, Competition for Desirable Partners, Sexualizing Women's Bodies, and Avoiding Talk About Sexual Attraction to Men. The unique themes specific to bisexual interviewees were Disproportionate Attraction, Physical Appearance Is Important to Men Who Are Attracted to Men, Importance of Emotional Connection, Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men, Anxieties About Long-Term Relationships, Belief that Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality, and Finding the "Right Person." The unique themes specific to heterosexual interviewees were Desire for Sexual Validation and Shame at One's Sexual Behavior. The unique theme for the gay participants was Pornography and Sexual Orientation Identity. The overarching themes and the unique themes that emerged from the study were situated into a grid in order to illustrate their interrelationships and effects. The following chapter will explore the significance of the findings. I will also detail how the study's findings may be integrated into what is already know about men's sexual self-schemas.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Discussion of the Findings

Very little has been known about how masculine ideals affect men's sexual self-

schemas. There is even less understanding of the effects of these norms on gay and

bisexual men. This exploratory study uses hegemonic masculinity to understand gay and

bisexual men's attitudes and behaviors regarding sex and romantic relationships.

Additionally, this research details a comprehensive model of how masculinity

socialization affects gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men's sexual self-schemas. Many

dysfunctional aspects of the sexual schemas described in these models do appear to be

interconnected, forming a syndrome that impairs men's ability to connect to others and

maintain proper mental health.

These findings appear to reflect previous studies that have examined similar

themes (Brooks, 1995a; Elder et al., 2012); however, data from this study further

explicate the adverse impact of masculinity on men's relationships according to sexual

orientation identity. I will now position each of the components of the present study in

light of the existing research. I will first detail themes of the gay participants' sexual self-

schema themes and process outlined above, followed by the bisexual interviewees'

themes and process. I will point out where the current schemas add to what is already

understood about gay and bisexual masculinities, as well as what is already understood about the male sexual self-schema. Finally, I will also add discussion regarding elements of this study that add significantly to understandings of how masculinity affects men's relationships and sexual activities.

Gay Participants' Themes

Internalized Homonegativity

Similar to previous research, many gay men in this study indicated that portraying a masculine image, including heteromasculine behaviors, interests, and attitudes, was highly desirable (Sanchez et al, 2009). This motivation to appear as adherent to masculinity norms as possible seems a reasonable yet tragic result of a culture where gender atypical boys are the victims of negative reactions of peers and adults (Blakemore, 2003; Cater & McCloskey, 1984; Lamb, Easterbrooks, & Holden, 1980; Pachankis & Bernstein, 2012; Young & Sweeting, 2004). Gay men learn through personal experiences with bullying and abuse the importance of obeying these masculine ideals (Corliss, Cochran, & Mays, 2002; Harry, 1989; Wyss, 2004).

Operating in conjunction with this bullying may be a negative internalization and sensitivity to outward appearance. Gay men may censor any part of the self believed to reflect ideas of femininity in place of masculinity (Levesaque & Vichesky, 2005; Pachankis & Bernstein, 2012; Simonson, Blazina, & Watkins, 2000). Gay men may experience higher levels of anxiety as adults related to the disapproval they experienced growing up as gender nonconforming boys, leading to displays of hypermasculine traits in order to cope with public self-consciousness and anxious affect (Pachankis &

Bernstein, 2012). This may also lead to discomfort with effeminate gay men as a result of internalized shame regarding their sexuality (Pachankis & Bernstein; 2012; Schwartzberg & Rosenberg, 1998; Lanzieri & Hildebrandt, 2012). For example, interviewees said they preferred not to date, or even be seen with effeminate men, which may lead some gay men to question their self-worth, as suggested in other research (Liu, Rochlan, & Mohr, 2005; Sanchez et al., 2009).

Participants also described homonegativity as being stronger within the gay community than without, which has been mentioned elsewhere in research, describing gay culture as a "cult of masculinity." This phrase has been used to refer to the cognitive, behavioral, and physical regiments to which gay men adhere in order to fit into heteromasculine ideals endorsed from within the gay community (Signorile, 1997). Gay men's "femme-phobia," as described by participants, may be partly rooted in a desire to avoid being stereotyped and to distance themselves from the reality that they used to be feminine boys (Bailey, 1996). It is also hypothesized that gay men who are extremely conscious about masculinity and express anti-effeminacy feel negatively about their sexual orientation (Haldeman, 2006; Rice, 2006; Sanchez & Vilain, 2012; Schwartzberg & Rosenberg, 1998;).

Participants of this study pointed out that internalized homonegativity varied somewhat by degree of out-ness and by cultural background. Cultural factors shape attitudes about sexuality and identity, with unique characteristics seen as markers of maleness. For example, the emphasis on penetration as active and manly has led to a belief by some Latinos that "homosexuals" are those men who take a receptive role in anal intercourse, whereas "men" (i.e., heterosexuals) are those who take an insertive role,

regardless of the sex of the partner (Caballo-Dieguez, Dolezal, Nieves Rose, Diez, Decena, & Balan, 2004). As another example of the interplay of race and sexual identity, other studies have identified that many Black gay men do not identify directly with a gay identity, in part because they do not feel politically aligned with the majority White gay movement (Hunter, 2010).

Gay men in this study explained that men from some minority cultures and politically conservative backgrounds are more likely to continue to identify as heterosexual even while having nonrelational sex with other men. They explained that this is because of internalized homophobia and the desire to avoid long-term romantic relationships. Having nonrelational sex allows men with conflicted, multiple identities to enjoy some degree of physical and/or emotional closeness with men. This supports other research that has suggested that men who have sex with other men may describe their same-sex sexual contact as a "fling," thereby minimizing its emotional importance and, perhaps, relevance to sexual orientation identity (Reisen, Zea, Bianchi, Poppen, Shedlin, & Penha, 2012). Having children, being married, or having additional sexual or romantic relationships with women may also be structural factors that sometimes are seen as conveying heterosexuality, despite sexual activity (Reisen et al., 2012).

Pornography and Sexual Orientation Identity

Interviewees emphasized that pornography is used abundantly in the gay community (Duggan & McCreary, 2004) and is a more integrated and accepted element of gay culture than heterosexual (Thomas, 2000). During their formation of sexual orientation identity, gay interviewees explained that pornography constituted the only

media source where they could observe two men engaging in sexual activity. This notion is supported in other research that points out that many gay men use pornography as a way to educate themselves about sexual practices and to reduce the stigma and exclusion connected with being surrounded by heterosexist norms (Obendorf, 2006).

Critics of gay male pornography such as Harris (1997), Kendall (1993, 1997, 2004) and Signorile (1997) have suggested that pornography connects men to idealistic bodies and sexual practices that are far removed from the realities of the average viewer. It would seem logical that exposure to pornography would be associated with altered perceptions of gay men's own attractiveness and sexual desirability. However, of the empirical data regarding the effects of viewing pornography on gay men, only drive for muscularity has been correlated positively with exposure to pornography (Duggan & McCreary, 2004; Morrison, 2007). No other significant, detrimental associations, such as lower levels of sexual esteem or internalized homonegativity, have been found. These findings are generally congruent with those of this study. A group of 5 interviewees indicated that pornography had instilled them with unrealistic expectations about sexual performance, the performance of one's partner, frequency of sexual activities, and the centrality of sex in a relationship. However, the majority of participants did not evidence lower levels of sexual esteem or internalized homonegativity.

Although the only documented finding by empirical research, the link between desire for muscularity and pornography should not be discounted. Visual images of muscles and sexual experiences lead men to rigid behavioral and emotional patterns characteristic of hegemonic masculinity. Gay men may be led to believe that, in order to have sexual gratification, they must possess physiques similar to those of pornographic

actors, or that they are not achieving the highest level of sexual gratification unless they are engaging in sex with men who have muscular bodies (Duggan & McCreary, 2004). They may also feel that the ultimate objective for any sexual activity is orgasm (Klinkenberg & Rose, 1994), emphasizing the role of performance in sex, rather than sensuality and connection.

Still, the majority of participants did not believe gay pornography had any influence on their ideas about sex or relationships. Most saw pornography simply as a useful aid for masturbation and sex education. This seems to suggest a multi-faceted dialogue about sexually explicit material. Further investigation of the effects of pornography on gay men's lives is warranted, including its role in gay men's attitudes toward themselves and others, moderator variables in how viewers absorb the messages contained in pornography, and what causes change in the viewers' perceptions of reality based on body and sexual practices. Of course, it is also possible that gay pornography may not cause the degree of harm anticipated and that other interpretations of the effects of gay pornography may be considered.

Physically Attractive Men

This study underlined that gay men place a great deal of importance on the physical attractiveness of a mate and strong preference for youthful looking partners (Baily, Gaulin, Agyei, & Gladue, 1994; Kenrick, Keefe, Bryan, Barr, & Brown, 1995; Lippa, 2007). This may contribute to gay men reporting a high level of body dissatisfaction and pressure to maintain an "ideal" body for others (Kaminski, Chapman, Haynes, & Own, 2005; Morrison, Morrison, & Sager, 2004; Sanchez et al., 2009;

Tiggemann, Martins, & Kirkbride, 2007; Yelland & Tiggemann, 2003). Gay culture

emphasizes physical appearance as central to judgment of social worth (Feldman &

Meyer, 2007) and involvement in gay culture is associated with a heightened desire for

muscle development (Chaney, 2008). In this cultural context, gay men are at increased

risk for maladaptive appearance focus, body dissatisfaction, and eating disorder

symptoms (Wiseman & Moradi, 2010). For example, recent studies indicate that body fat

dissatisfaction and drive for muscularity among gay men is predictive of depression,

eating restraint, eating concerns, and social sensitivity (Blashill, 2010; Breenan, Craig, &

Thompson, 2012).

The prominence of appearance and the negative effect of this emphasis on one's

confidence are likely the result of the male gaze. Men generally place a greater

importance on physical attractiveness when compared to women (Bailey et al, 1994).

Other explanations for this intense level of self-objectification include childhood gender

non-conformity that leads adult men to conform to heterosexual male idealizations of the

physical body (Miller, 1998; Strong, Singh, & Randall, 2000) and minority stress

(Kimmel & Mahaik, 2005). Gay men may compensate for cultural sexual prejudice with

a muscular body in order to illustrate conformity to masculine norms (Brennan et al.,

2012; Wood, 2004). From this last perspective, muscular gay men can be understood to

undermine and threaten distinctions between gay and heterosexual men by revealing the

performativity of masculinity itself (Duncan, 2010).

However, a unique element of this study was participants' articulation of the

physical characteristics of an attractive, masculine man. Whereas heterosexual men tend

to identify strongly with a body part emphasizing physical, sexual pleasure (e.g., breasts,

legs, butt), gay men in this study found the face to be the most attractive feature of a man and did not demonstrate a high level of body part objectification. This is in contrast to research that has demonstrated that gay men find muscles to be the most attractive feature of a man (Bartholome, Tewksbury, & Bruzzone, 2000; Swami & Tovee, 2008). There may be several explanations for this lack of discussion of specific body parts gay men found attractive. First, men in this study could be adhering to gay cultural norms also observed in this study, which specify gay men should not be explicit about their observations of other men's attractiveness. Second, when describing what they find most attractive about a man, many gay men may not have a specific muscle they find particularly attractive, which led to their neglecting muscularity as a response. Finally, some researchers have suggested that beyond a specific body part, the trait particularly valued in a man's appearance was a sense of masculinity (Lumby, 1978). Gay men may rate a man's behavior as being more attractive that his appearance (Sanchez & Vilain, 2012). A man's face may convey gendered behavior or physical components of expression that symbolically characterize masculine gender performance. Gay men in this study may have emphasized facial features as the vehicle to connect with a particular masculine behavior. This seems to emphasize that no matter how much a gay man may focus on his muscular development, the assessment of his masculinity is ultimately about his behavior, as marked by focus on the attractiveness of the face.

Gay men of color in this study voiced unique concerns related to sexual orientation identity, appearance, race, and discrimination. Recent research has underlined that gay men of color are exposed to greater stress from outside the LGB communities (Moradi, Wiseman, DeBlaere, Goodman, Sarkees, Brewster, & Huag, 2010). This study

supports research which also describes additional stress for gay men of color that comes from within the gay community in the form of the premium placed on White men's bodies as attractive, making it difficult to find other men to date and form long-term relationships (Green, 2008; Han, 2008). It may be that gay men from various minority populations experience body dissatisfaction in ways that are different from White men (Ricciardelli, McCade, Williams, & Thompson, 2007).

Although examining sexual prejudice in sexual minority communities is beyond the scope of this study, both bisexual and gay interviewees of color said that Whiteness is seen as most attractive in the gay community and that they are not considered attractive to other men. This may contribute to distinctive mental health issues for sexual minority men of color. Although sexual preference for a particular body type may seem in itself harmless, the exclusion of men of color from consideration as potential long-term partners is an instrument of racism. Discrimination in what is found to be attractive is a form of sexual objectification that dehumanizes individuals by exchanging the whole person for only a part of themselves—namely, skin color (Teunis, 2007). Racism in standards of attraction in gay communities emphasizes a form of oppression, through the lack of representation and lack of integration of people of color.

This study also adds to the understanding of resilience of gay men of color, despite social and political marginalization. Although family support is an important factor in mental health and resilience of LGB individuals in general, it is especially important to sexual minorities of ethnic minority backgrounds (Ryan, Heubner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009). Gay men of color in this study emphasized that, as their families grew in their acceptance of their sexual minority identity, they also felt an increased sense of self-

acceptance. Parental and caregiver behavior may be especially important to the mental health of gay men of color. Efforts to educate families about the impact of rejecting behaviors may make a critical difference in helping decrease risk and increasing well-being of these men.

Managing Sex and Social Perception

The absence of talk about gay men's observations about other men's bodies indicates that gay men either do not objectify other men's bodies or that there is an internalized sense that this kind of talk is unacceptable. Given the evidence that gay men do indeed objectify their own and others' bodies, at rates even higher than those of heterosexual men (Kozak, Frankenhauser, & Roberts, 2009), this leads to questions about why these cognitions are not commonly articulated to peers, which has not previously been examined.

Men who are seen to embody the perceived excesses of gay life, such as high frequency of sexual activity and objectifying other men's bodies, were dismissed by interviewees as superficial and lacking in intellectual and emotional depth. Not talking about their attractions for other men may help gay and bisexual men feel less vulnerable to the gender "failings" of not being attracted to women, even among gay peers. Avoiding discussion of sex and other men's bodies may be seen as a form of self-control, as a means of distancing oneself from gay stereotypes, and as an overall downplay of the significance of gay men's sexual orientation identity in the face of internalized sexual prejudice (Duncan, 2010; Sanchez & Vilain, 2012).

There may be several additional factors at play in gay men's silence regarding their objectifying of men's bodies. First, the absence of this open talk about objectification of men's bodies may be related to internalized homonegativity. Pressures on gay men to express traditional masculinity in the form of attraction to women might contribute to their not discussing their homosexual attraction or sexual activities. This suggests that gay men's internalized homophobia may be related to not discussing men's bodies.

Second, recent studies indicate that gay men may learn to manage impressions of themselves from an early age. Individuals with a minority sexual orientation may learn to manipulate their behavior in order to downplay their sexual orientation. Management of impressions may be a functional, adaptive strategy, given strong pressures to avoid rejection and a lack of corrective experiences to confirm the safety of genuine self-presentation (Pachankis & Bernstein, 2012). Interviewees in this study expressed being especially sensitive to how they are perceived and also recounted having learned to strategically negotiate that perception. For example, gay interviewees felt they should give in to others' sexual advances in order to maintain approval. Gay participants were also especially self-conscious of perceptions that they were sexually promiscuous. Paradoxically, some research has linked public self-consciousness among gay and bisexual men to predict reports of risky sexual practices, as well as higher numbers of sexual partners and sexual encounters (Hart & Heimberg, 2005; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2006). Indeed, continually managing one's self presentation depletes one's capacity to focus on self-enhancing pursuits and may ultimately contribute to poor mental health (Baumeister, Dwall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005).

Competition for Men

In recent years, the use of Objectification Theory has become popular in studies of heterosexual and gay men's sexual behavior (see, for example, Kozak et al., 2009; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This theory asserts that individuals who are consistently exposed to sexually objectifying images will progressively adopt an observer's perspective, thereby forming judgments about their own bodies and sense of self on the extent to which they emulate the sexualized cultural images (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Gay men may be more attracted to men who are just as concerned or preoccupied with the physical attractiveness of their partners (Martins, Tiggemann, & Kirkbride, 2007). This may lead them to be more attracted to men who are as lean and muscular as they are, since they infer that these men are equally vested in their own appearance.

Participants described the gay community as a domain of competition in which systems of judgment related to attractiveness produced a status order. A kind of sexual capitol, mentioned in other literature, accrues for those for whom there is a general consensus regarding desirability (Martin & George, 2006). Markers of this desirability include physical features, gender performance (for example, presenting in more or less masculine ways), and careful impression management (Green, 2008; Green, 2011). Gay men in this study demonstrated a common sense of what was attractive and then situated themselves and others within it. These decisions were based on others' responses to their physical appearance, which was rooted in adherence to heteromasculine ideals, especially musculature. Gay men who were nearer the top of a body hierarchy (with a muscular,

tanned body at the top of the order) had a more positive sense of their erotic capital, while those who perceived themselves as less attractive might feel marginalized and have less agency in terms of competing for potential partners. The attractiveness of partners was also seen as an estimation of one's own attractiveness (Varangis, Lanzieri, & Feldman, 2012).

Preoccupation with competition may vary depending on city size and short-term versus long-term relationship consideration. First, city size may influence the degree of competition and the degree of importance men assign to attractiveness of a potential partner (Sharp, Elliot, & Zvonkovic, 2011). Men who lived in densely populated metropolitan settings valued good looks more than men in small metropolitan settings. This may due to larger pools of potential partners, so that men can afford to be more selective in the characteristics they seek in romantic partners. A larger city may allow a person to be more inflexible in his preferences than a person with a smaller pool. Second, gay men rate muscular figures as more attractive for a short-term relationship than bodies rated for a long-term relationship (Varangis, Lanzieri, Hildebrandt, & Feldman, 2012). The increased value of body attractiveness in short-term dating may lead to more competition for this type of relationship.

Results of this study outlined a type of self-presentation referred to as "playing games," in which gay men deceive, or misrepresent, their level of interest in others in order to maintain a sense of disinterest, control, or social power. These behaviors included delaying responding to communications, not initiating invitations for future dates, and not disclosing emotionally in order to invoke status. Participants reported that this gave the appearance that an individual asserts less interest than the man pursuing

him. This has been documented as a strategy by which a gay man who does not feel that the way he is manipulating his appearance is working may change his demeanor as a tactic to attract attention (Green, 2011).

Sex and Emotion

Similar to heterosexual men's sexual self-schemas, a primary role of masculinity for gay men is in avoiding emotional talk with other men (Elder et al., 2012). Participants in this study emphasized that, in order to meet masculinity norms, they avoided affection and emotional expressiveness (Sanchez et al., 2009). The avoidance of empathy, compromise, talking about intimate issues, and generosity that were seen as feminine behaviors; this perception likely interferes with gay men's ability to intimately connect with one another.

Although other research has demonstrated that gay men are interested in casual sex (Baily, Gaulin, Agyei, & Gladue, 1994; Kenrick, Keefe, Bryan, Barr, & Brown, 1995; Lippa, 2007; Sanchez et al., 2009), desire a sense of emotional closeness, but do not want to talk about feelings (Blazina & Watkins, 200; Brannon, 1976; & Pollack, 1995), this study conceptualized how these conflicted desires interplay. Gay men may separate, or compartmentalize, sex and emotions (Bonello & Cross, 2012). Consequently, participants in this study suggested that gay men may have casual sex in order to have a sense of intimacy without the risks associated with emotional disclosure (Haldeman, 2001; Scrivner, 1997). This may contribute to a normalized sense for men that sex is casual and can be substituted for long-term relationships (Brooks, 1995a; Elder et al., 2012).

Compartmentalization may also play part in the ability of participants to establish open relationships. This is based on participants' assertion that, despite the fact that their relationships were not sexually monogamous, their relationships were emotionally monogamous. Monogamy was largely equated with emotional commitment, and infidelity constituted the formation of an emotional bond with another man (Bonello & Cross, 2012). This may suggest that, within an open relationship, maintaining an emotional union based on emotional needs, domestic drive, shared history, and commitment may be separated from engagement in casual sex. It has been suggested that, for gay men, these emotional components may constitute "the primary relationship" (Bonello & Cross, 2012). Interviewees described how they protected the primary relationship through a process of emotional avoidance in casual sex outside the relationship. These strategies enabled participants to engage in emotionally detached sexual encounters as well as through the process of compartmentalization of emotion.

Unique to this study, participants also reported using casual sex as a means of coping, to soothe lack of self-worth, and to avoid feeling alone. Interviewees reported using sex as a means of getting to know others without risking emotional vulnerability inherent in personal disclosure. Sex was also seen as an investment into the security and trust of a developing relationship that encouraged emotional risk and disclosure.

Commitment and Work

Overall, little has been written describing the commitment or partner preferences of gay men. Much of the literature on gay men's relationships focuses on couple dynamics (Kurdek, 2008; Mohr & Daly, 2008; Wienke & Hill, 2009), objectification

(Martins, Tiggemann, & Kirkbride, 2007), and men living in metropolitan cities (Hatala & Prehodka, 1996). However, roughly half of young gay men in the US indicate that they would eventually like to formalize their commitment to a partner in either a commitment or marriage ceremony (Sharp, Elliott, & Zvonkovic, 2011).

Recent research has found that tangible investments, including possessions, money, and pets, were not predictors of commitment for gay men (Kurdek, 2007). However, nontangible investments, such as self-disclosure, time, and effort did predict commitment (Lehmiller, 2010). This could be because certain tangible investments are largely unavailable (such as getting married) or difficult to make (such as having children) for gay couples. Because gay couples typically lack formal legal recognition of their relationships, certain types of tangible investments (such as having a joint checking account or a shared possession) may serve as relatively weaker inducement to stay in a relationship, because legal action is usually not required to divide up those investments if that relationship were to end (Kurdek, 2004). Intangible investments, such as emotional investments, and especially emotional validation, carry substantial meaning for gay men (Gottman et al., 2003). This insight also supports research that indicates that a high degree of intimacy is the largest deterrent to leaving their current relationship (Kurdek, 2006). Because of the lack of emphasis on financial security or children in gay couples' commitments, a premium may be placed on the quality of the emotional commitment.

Although participants in this study stated that they most enjoyed their relationship once they had reached a firm commitment and had done the work necessary to resolve partnership difficulties, this study also suggests there is more to examine regarding how men overcome relationship conflict in order to stay together. Interestingly, gay men in

this study indicated that being in a long-term, committed relationship allowed them to loosen adherence to traditional masculinity notions of self-disclosure. This is consistent with previous research suggesting that, although gay men do struggle with emotional restriction and affectionate behavior between men, within the context of a romantic relationship they are able to somewhat relax these masculine norms (West, Pionke, & Vogal, 2005). Participants suggested that it was only when they had fully committed to their relationships, not through legal means that recognized their union, but in a formal way with their partner, that they began to emotionally self-disclose in a way that fostered relationship growth. They also learned to repair conflict, demonstrate deep empathy with their partner, and compromise, elements that have been shown to be key to maintaining relationships (Gottman, 1999). This may imply that emotional expressiveness requires a break with hegemonic masculinity, to which gay men may adhere in order to keep themselves safe from perceived bullying and further interpersonal trauma. Gay men in this study underlined that the safety of a partnership provided an environment in which they were willing to experiment in new ways to have discussions that elicited difficult emotions.

<div align="center">Gay Participants' Process</div>

The Process of Gay Sexual Self-Schema Transition

This process contradicts assumptions about sexual orientation behavior as being a stable trait that has a consistent effect on a person's relationship and sexual behavior. Although interviewees did not report any changes in their sexual orientation toward other men, they did describe experience-dependent flexibility in their attitudes and behavior. It

is notable that there exist contradictions among the themes. For example, gay participants demonstrated flexibility in the importance of physical attraction. They described a strong emphasis on attraction at one point in their development, but as they encountered different situations, relationships, and life stages, the importance of one's own attraction and the attraction of one's partner became less significant. Additionally, interviewees reported a decrease in internalized homophobia with time, as well as an increased importance placed on emotional expression.

Although this idea of sexual "plasticity" or "fluidity" has been applied to female sexual behavior (Baumeister, 2000; Baumeister, Cantanese, & Vohs, 2001), the notion of change in desired partner characteristics, preferred sexual practices, and consistency between attitudes and behaviors, this variation has not been explored in male sexuality. This research provides critical support for the notion of a difference in men's capacity for sexual variability. The sexual self-schemas outlined by this process provides the most robust and comprehensive explanation for the data gathered in this study.

This process outlined how culture, experience, and personal insight shifted focus of various elements in the sexual self-schema, including attraction, going through a period of promiscuity, first relationship issues, monogy relationships, taking intrapersonal developmental steps, and finding social acceptance. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to outline how all of the issues expressed by gay interviewees relate to the literature examining gay sexual self-schema transition, several elements of this theme touch on recent research articles. This process also presents novel findings.

As a man develops, although he may be born with a wide range of relational capacities, masculinity socialization imposes upon him standards that include restriction,

competition, validation seeking, homonegativity, and rejecting of the "feminine self" (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Best, 1983; Gilmore, 1990). While going through this progression, gay men learn to give up important parts of their human potential. Like heterosexual men, gay and bisexual men have been raised in a culture that emphasizes social power as positively correlated to a set of masculine ideals (Harry, 1982, 1983; Martin, 1990; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993).

One of the elements of an evolving gay sexual self-schema explained by interviewees was the topic of open versus monogamous relationships. Although gay men may begin with monogamy at the outset of their relationships, casual sex may eventually be initiated and sexual nonexclusivity established. As in other research on gay couples, interviewees highlighted that discussing this issue in terms of occurrence and acceptance and agreeing on its boundaries were a relationship norm for gay couples (Coyle & Kitzinger, 1995). Interviewees in open relationships stressed comparable relationship satisfaction as monogamous participants (Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; LaSala, 2004). Interviewees offered a unique perspective on how these decisions are arrived at, including relationship difficulties, and emphasized the importance of trust and establishing parameters.

Another finding highlighted in this study was that the importance of appearance decreases with developmental stage. This is in direct contradiction with two of the major themes of the study, Physically Attractive Men and Competition for Men, which outlined the importance of attraction to gay men and the importance of finding an attractive partner. Some have hypothesized that older gay men may devalue appearance because they feel less close to standards of attractiveness in the gay community (Wahler &

Gabby, 1997), or that gay men may have a sense of "accelerated aging," because of the emphasis on the young, muscular man within gay culture (Wahler & Gabby, 1997). However, for many participants in this study, physical attractiveness appeared to become less important as they went through other developmental steps. This notion is supported by research by Slevin and Linneman (2010) that documented that, as gay men age, they work to recognize, accept, and be comfortable with themselves as they are, not as others might have them be. As they aged, some interviewees said they had arrived at a notable level of comfort with themselves and their bodies. This may lead to an acceptance of others' bodies and a broader consideration of attractiveness as well. These insights by older interviewees underline the body's role as a site of struggle and ambivalence in shaping masculine identity, as well as how men transition into broader definitions of masculinity that are empowering.

Finally, as mentioned by interviewees, finding someone who was developmentally similar, who, for example, had come to an acceptance of their sexual orientation identity, was an important step in establishing a stable relationship. This was in contradiction with the theme Internalized Heterosexuality, which outlined gay participants' discrimination against men whose behavior was equated with homosexuality, such as effeminate men, and the importance of being perceived as "straight-acting," or behaving in a heteromasculine manner as a way to overcome marginalization. However, self-acceptance of one's gay identity has been found to predict both relationship quality and attachment security (Elizur & Mintzer, 2003). These results are congruent with developmental theory and research that link identity integration with the ability to form intimate relationships (Garbarino, Gaa, Swand, McPherson, & Gratch,

1995). Consolidation of a positive gay identity is a unique process that gay males work through as they struggle to achieve a positive self-concept, resolve internalized heterosexism, and develop of more positive self-image. Positive gay identity development affects relationship quality, authenticity, disclosure, and coping (Cass, 1996).

The increasing importance of finding someone developmentally similar also explains a contradiction between the theme Sex and Emotion, as well as the Commitment and Work theme. Although initially men may avoid emotional connection and vulnerability and instead have frequent sex, with experience and time, men eventually became more comfortable with overt emotional talk with a romantic partner and did not have sex in order to avoid talking about emotions. Gay men may eventually be willing to engage in certain behaviors they have avoided, such as empathy, compromise, emotional expression, and generosity, all of which are valuable in a relationship. Finding a partner who has come to value these traits and behaviors with time, although avoided during earlier stages in dating, becomes increasingly important over the lifespan.

<center>Bisexual Participants' Themes</center>

Disproportionate Attraction

There has been debate that, among men, sexual orientation is bimodal in that men are either exclusively heterosexual or homosexual in their sexual orientation identity (Bailey, 2009; Chivers, Rieger, Latty, & Bailey, 2004; Rieger, Chivers, & Bailey, 2005). These arguments suggest that categories that include levels of both same-sex and other-sex sexuality are rare or nonexistent among men. However, recent findings have

identified men with genital and subjective bisexual arousal patterns (Cerney & Janssen, 2011; Rosenthal, Sylva, Safron, & Bailey, 2011), and estimates project that 32% of men self-identify as bisexual (Vrangalova & Savin-Williams, 2012). These recent studies differed from previous research in that they included more stringent subject inclusion criteria than past studies, requiring subjects have romantic and sexual experience with both sexes. Although the only inclusion criterion for this study was that participants' self-identify as bisexual, according to behavioral criteria used in other studies (namely, at least two sexual partners of each sex and a romantic relationship of at least three months' duration with at least one person of each sex), 14 of this study's 20 participants met these romantic and sexual relationship behavioral criteria. The participants in this study echoed claims from these quantitative studies that bisexuality is a legitimate and valid sexual orientation group. The themes from bisexual participants illustrated a unique and distinct sexual self-schema, significantly different from that of heterosexual or gay interviewees. In fact, there was more overlap in the way masculinity socialization affected gay and heterosexual men than between bisexual men or men of other sexual orientation identities.

New research has also suggested that, even though the other sex was also arousing to them, bisexual men may have a marked preference for stimuli of one sex over the other (Rosenthal et al, 2011), as was also articulated by men in this study. Findings of this study are congruent with recent findings that sexual orientation is perhaps best categorized as five rather than three groups in order to reflect the nature of sexual orientation components: [identify the five groups here] (Vrangalova & Savin-Williams, 2012). Although men in this study have adopted the bisexual orientation identity as a

relatively accurate representation of their sexual attraction and partners, it is not necessarily an ideal representation. There seem to be two viable, additional intermediate categories of attraction and sexual activity: "mostly heterosexual," situated between heterosexual and bisexual, and "mostly gay," situated between bisexual and gay. This study sample supported the notion of three categories as falling between exclusively gay and exclusively heterosexual attraction, with some distinctive patterns among the three categories (Vrangalova & Savin-Williams, 2012). Although this sample of bisexual men had more male sex partners, they seemed to rely less on sex and more on attraction to justify their chosen identity label.

Overt Sexualizing of Women's Bodies

There has been no research examining bisexual men and objectification as it pertains to men or women. Although bisexual men in this study suggested that they tend to focus on outward appearance to a lesser degree than gay or heterosexual men, the extent to which bisexual males focused on women's or men's bodies to appraise level of attraction has yet to be examined. The theme, Overt Sexualizing of Women's Bodies, focuses on men's compulsion to look at women. Similar to the Sexualizing Women's Bodies theme found by Elder et al. (2012), the bisexual men in this study found that women's bodies may become a collection of body parts for which they have developed a personal affinity (for example, being an "ass-man" or a "leg-man"). This theme also points to the process of sexualizing women's bodies as having a homosocial element, similar to findings by Quinn (2002), who noted that "girl-watching" often facilitates relationships between men.

Covert Sexualizing of Men's Bodies

Perceived negative and positive outcomes of social devaluation were common to bisexual men's discussion of whether they would be overt or covert about their sexual fantasies and observations of men's and women's bodies. Participants did not talk about their attractions to men in part because of societal sexual prejudice. First, they felt discomfort on the part of heterosexual peers hearing these comments, because they sensed heterosexual peers were uncomfortable hearing about romantic relationships with or sexual feelings toward someone of the same sex. It is not surprising that bisexual men did not speak about their attraction to men to heterosexual peers, given that various scholars of men and masculinity have argued that heterosexual masculinity is characterized by homonegativity (Herek, 1986; Kimmel, 1994).

When it came to other sexual minority peers, bisexual men's silence regarding their objectifying of men's bodies may be affected by internalized homonegativity (Sanchez & Vilain, 2012). As gay participants described in the Managing Sex and Social Perception theme, bisexual men may also experience pressure to express traditional masculinity, which might contribute to their not discussing their attraction to other men or their same-sex sexual activities. This may suggest internalized homophobia related to not discussing men's bodies.

Bisexual men may also not speak about their fantasies and observations of men's bodies because they have learned to manage impressions of themselves from an early age. As mentioned above, individuals with a minority sexual orientation may learn to manipulate their behavior in order to downplay their sexual orientation. They may have not felt strong parental or peer support, given strong pressures to conform to traditional

masculinity. Bisexual interviewees in this study were especially sensitive to how they are perceived and may strategically negotiate that perception.

Physical Appearance Is Important to Men

Who Are Attracted to Men

Because of their participation in the gay community, bisexual men are more likely to exist in a subculture that readily objectifies their appearance. Recent research suggests bisexual men experience higher levels of body dissatisfaction compared to heterosexual men and similar levels compared to gay men (Davids & Green, 2011). Bisexual men's involvement in the gay community is also predictive of body dissatisfaction, drive for muscularity, and self-esteem (Davids & Green, 2011).

Results of this study describe bisexual men's understanding that gay men make decisions to pursue relationships with other men on the basis of physical attractiveness and how they respond to this pressure to appear attractive. Interviewees described a greater degree of competition among men for the attention of the most attractive men. Interviewees explained this emphasis on attraction was related to social status and higher frequency of casual sex among men. Bisexual men in this study also suggested that women do not apply a similar pressure to the men they date.

Bisexual participants' explanation that gay men are the source of the pressure they feel to appear as attractive as possible raises interesting questions about differences between bisexual and gay men's motivations to appear attractive. Whereas gay men seem to have a more internalized sense of this motivation, perhaps because they are exclusively involved in a culture that emphasizes appearance, bisexual men in this study were

concerned about their appearance only as far as it pertained to the gaze of gay men. Bisexual men seem to have a less internalized sense of this pressure to appear attractive than gay men. Perhaps this drive for attractiveness is not internalized to the same degree because of bisexual male participants' own focus on emotional connection and their romantic and sexual experiences with women that focus less on appearance. It may also be connected to a wide range of features bisexual men find attractive. For example, the bisexual men did not report the same focus on White features as gay men did, and nearly all found men and women of color equally attractive to White men and women.

The Importance of Emotional Connection

In contrast to other research about gender performance among bisexual individuals (Pennington, 2009), this study did not find that bisexuals' performance of gender directly reflected normative heterocentric gender ideologies. In no theme was this more evident than The Importance of Emotional Connection. Bisexual men in this study underlined the role of emotional expressiveness, comfort expressing emotion, and preference for emotional connection during sex that was unlike the reports of the gay or heterosexual interviewees.

It is possible that, for bisexual men, not fitting masculinity norms may result in positive outcomes for their relationships. For example, bisexual men, by not fitting the heteromasculine expectation of attraction to women, may also avoid the pressure to remain emotionally inexpressive. Bisexual men in this study expressed strong motivation to feel emotionally connected and a desire to only have sex when feeling a sense of commitment and understanding.

An additional positive benefit of placing less value on traditional male norms was interviewees' enjoyment of a wide range of sexual activities that prioritized the pleasure of both partners and established a strong emotional connection. Research has indicated that gay and bisexual men's endorsement of traditionally masculine ideals predicts a penetrative sexual role in sex with men and less variation in sexual activities (Bailey, Kim, Hills, & Linsenmeier, 1997; Moskowitz & Hart, 2011). The correlation between bisexual men's deviating from masculine role norms and lack of focus on penetrative sex may be evidenced in a recent report, which indicated that bisexual men were much more likely to engage in mutual masturbation than gay men and that, overall, bisexual men had sex less frequently than gay men (Rosenberger et al., 2011). Masculinity may be a proxy measure for focus on penetration in sex, as well as prioritizing emotional connection, power sharing, an emphasis placed on dominance, and emotional vulnerability. Bisexual participants' unwillingness to assume a sexual self-label (e.g., penetrative or "top," or receptive or "bottom") may be the result of not prioritizing masculinity performance in the same degree as heterosexual and gay men.

Difficulty Emotionally Connecting with Men

This theme highlights the fact that bisexual men may experience differently gendered subjectivities with partners of different genders, or, in other words, distinct ways of understanding, thinking about, and experiencing themselves as masculine in relation to different partners (Steinman, 2011). Bisexual men in this study did not feel that same-sex intimacy allowed for a wide range of emotional expression to be identified as masculine or to be expressed in one's masculinity. This led bisexual men to have a

higher frequency of nonrelational, or unemotionally connected, sex with men (Rosenberger et al., 2011). This was in contrast to opposite-sex relationships, which were seen as experiences that included an expanded range of masculinity behaviors, including disclosure, vulnerability, and authenticity. Although quite conflicting, these respective masculine performances existed within the same participants. Moving between partners of different genders may involve moving between different gender expectations. For the majority of men in this study, this meant moving from same-sex encounters, which were imbued with the norms of traditional masculinity, to interactions with women, which allowed for an extended range of emotional expression.

Moving between various gender constructions as one moves between relationships and social settings (in this case, between expressiveness and inexpressiveness) is likely not only challenging to perform, but also to reconcile internally. It may be that this led to bisexual interviewees to prefer emotional disclosure in all of their relationships. There is also a certain nongendered sensibility that communicating about one's emotions and inner experiences creates intense emotional connection and relationship satisfaction. This unique theme identifies an element of bisexual men's behavior that is especially dissonant with heteromasculinity. Selective inexpressiveness among interviewees also highlights the degree to which men's' lives and relationships are deeply embedded in masculine role norms.

Anxieties about Long-Term Relationships

This theme was colored by bisexual men's concerns about the sociopolitical ramifications of choosing a male versus a female partner and underlines that one's status

as a sexual minority can affect mental health issues, such as worry content. For example, worry about discrimination due to sexual orientation may be associated with poorer mental health. Although no studies have examined anxiety in bisexual men, in studies of gay and lesbian women, gay men were almost three times as likely to report a lifetime occurrence of Generalized Anxiety Disorder, and worries related to sexual orientation were strongly related to lower quality of life and internalized homophobia (Gilman, Cochran, Mays, Hughes, Ostrow, & Kessler, 2001; Weiss & Hope, 2011). This study offers unique insight into the level of anxiety potentially experienced by bisexual men, as well as information about the nature of the worry, the most salient anxiety topics, and methods of coping. Findings suggest bisexual men may experience an exceptional degree of societal stigma and prejudice.

Although previous research suggests that bisexual men distance themselves from threatening identities (Burke, 1997; Moradi, van der Berg, & Epting, 2006), this research also suggests that bisexual men distance themselves from threatening life decisions, such as partnering with other men. This suggests a link between bisexual men's levels of internalized threat and guilt with bisexual orientation preferences. Other studies demonstrate that this internalized guilt results in disturbance in cohesion of the self, ego fragmentation, dissonance between self-concept and bisexual identity (Moradi, van der Berg, & Epting, 2009), and self-devaluation and denigration (Meyer & Dean, 1998). For bisexual men in this study, threat of sociopolitical oppression is likely associated with intrapersonal stress, identity tension, and conflict.

One of the greatest anxieties of bisexual men in this study was that they would not be able to satisfy their sexual desires while in a monogamous relationship. This was

complicated by bisexual participants' preference to have sex only within the context of a relationship. This sample may not be representative of a more broad population of bisexual men, however. Other studies have indicated that bisexual men are less likely than gay men to report engaging in their most recent sexual encounter with a relationship partner, and that this may be increasingly the case as they grow older (Rosenberger, 2011). This could be the result of high levels of stigma for bisexual men that would make finding a long-term partner difficult (Herek, 2009). It could also be a function of bisexual men being more likely to be in a relationship with a female partner and having extra-relational sex outside the primary relationship.

Belief That Others Misperceive Male Bisexuality

Consistent with previous research on biphobia, participants in this study emphasized that binegativity is expressed by homosexuals and heterosexuals alike (Ochs, 1996; Weiss, 2004). Bisexuality is rarely acknowledged as a possible ground for valid, mature adult identification (Angelides, 2000). Prominent models of bisexual identity suggest that bisexual men may be especially likely to remain uncertain about their sexual orientation identity during adulthood, in part because they receive little support for their sexual orientation identity (Klesse, 2011; Mock & Eibach, 2012; Weinberg, Williams, & Pryor, 1994).

This study underlines the specific societal messages that may lead bisexual men to sexual orientation identity conflict. For interviewees, this conflict resulted in personal debate whether to eventually identify either as heterosexual or gay, because they sensed that others held strong sexual prejudices, including the belief that bisexual men are

incapable of long-term commitment, are actually gay, are simply confused, or are promiscuous, as well as the perception that women will not date men who at some point have had relationships with other men (as has also been documented in Farajaje-Jones, 1995; Ochs, 1996; Rust, 2002; Sumpter, 1991). Many of these false stereotypes conflict with masculinity norms, including the desire of bisexual men to be emotionally expressive, the difficulty they find in emotionally connecting with men, avoidance of the sociopolitical consequences of gay relationships, and the emphasis on physical attractiveness in the gay community.

Participants in this study pointed out how stigma had direct relevance in their relationship choices and conception of future relationships. For example, erroneous social beliefs may include the perception that bisexual men in same-sex relationships are somehow able to "choose" the sex of their romantic partner. There may be a hope among friends and family that the bisexual person will finally settle down and connect with their "true" heterosexual desire. Additionally, should bisexual men choose a same-sex partner, interpersonal devaluing surrounding their relationship has been found to constitute added stress within the relationship and uncertainty about the future of the relationship. Many bisexual men find it difficult to integrate a same-sex partner into the more heteronormative parts of their lives (Klesse, 2011), and same-sex couples experience a negative association between sexual prejudice and relationship quality (Frost, 2011).

Arguably, the greatest sexual prejudice against bisexual individuals is that bisexuals are by necessity nonmonogamous. Research supports the high prevalence of nonmonogamous relationships among bi-identified people (Anderlini-D'onogrio, 2004; Klesse, 2007). However, men in this study overwhelmingly preferred monogamous

relationships and believed they would eventually establish long-term, monogamous relationships. The participants in this research demonstrated a commitment to honesty, communication, and negotiation. Similar to other research on bisexual men, the majority of bisexual men in this study were loyal in their relationships (McLean, 2004). Three had negotiated or were negotiating open relationships at one point, and despite some challenges along the way, they were committed to ensuring the partners involved were part of an ongoing open communication. Despite stereotypes or false beliefs about bisexual men, there was very little deception, malice, or lack of commitment in these relationships. In short, this research demonstrates that ideas about bisexual men as promiscuous and untrustworthy are inaccurate, misleading, and damaging to bisexual people.

Some research has suggested that bisexual participants of color are more likely to identify as bisexual than gay in order to avoid more intense heterosexism related to their cultural background (Meyer, 2010). This was not the case for bisexual men of color in this study. Latino and Black interviewees explained that, to be a man of color identified as any sexual minority, whether gay or bisexual, made one the object of sexual prejudice. This new understanding may help illustrate the institutional and cultural characteristics that might be associated with bisexual men's retention of heterosexual identity (Zea, Reisen, & Diaz, 2003). Bisexual men of color in this study were as likely as White bisexual men to disclose their bisexual identities. Five of the 10 men of color and 4 of the 10 White men were out about their bisexual identity, whereas half of the men of color and 5 of the White men were out "to some."

Despite the significant experiences of discrimination reported by participants in this study, there may be reason to hope that acceptance of bisexuality is on the rise. Recent reports suggest that there is an increasingly overt acceptance of homosexuality and bisexual among heterosexual male youth (Ripley, Anderson, McCormack, Adams, & Pitts, 2011). These researchers argue that young men are more likely to have gay and bisexual friends, endorse progay and probisexual sentiment, and not make comments or have negative reactions about sexual minorities. Heterosexual male youth have a greater acceptance of bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity and understand there is a difference between sexual practices and sexual orientation, that is, that sex with a man does not always equal homosexuality to these men (Anderson & Adams, 2011). This increased acceptance may be due to a decrease in religious fervor, widened access to the Internet, and media exposure (Baunach, Burgess, & Muse, 2010). This trend may decrease bisexual men's anxieties about their future relationship possibilities and make for a somewhat easier transition into bisexual sexual orientation identity.

Finding the "Right Person"

This theme illustrated the positive elements that interviewees mentioned in making a long-term relationship work. Comments suggested that an enduring relationship would come with finding a person with whom participants felt a strong, emotional bond. This focus may represent a strong emphasis on emotional connection and compatibility. It may also represent a strategy on the part of interviewees to distance themselves and their relationships from prevailing heterosexism, as described in the Belief that Others Misunderstand Male Bisexuality. Emphasizing an intense, inner experience with a partner

may allow bisexual men to externalize the stigma surrounding intimacy in their lives, locating the source of the stigma outside themselves, and create safe spaces within their relationships (Frost, 2011; Meyer & Ouellette, 2009). Intense focus on intimacy may protect bisexual men's relationships, making them less vulnerable to psychological consequences of stigma. This may suggest that bisexual men's relationships with partners may be strengthened as a result of external stigma and minority stress experiences, similar to positive responses to stigma found in other marginalized groups (Bauer, McAdams, & Pals, 2008; Frost, 2011; Hall & Fine, 2005; McAdams, 2006), where relationships are positively shaped as a result of resisting heterosexism.

Bisexual Participants' Process

The Process of Emerging Awareness of Bisexual Attraction

This study outlined a process of bisexual men discovering their bisexual orientation identity. This included initial romantic and sexual experiences with women during adolescence. This was followed by sexual experiences with men in late adolescence and early 20s, followed by romantic experiences with men for some interviewees. Although some interviewees came out as bisexual following these same-sex sexual experiences, others first identified as gay, and then began identifying as bisexual when their attraction to women persisted. This suggests that bisexual men may, at certain times in their development, learn cultural norms unique to heterosexual male sexual self-schemas, then learn gay male sexual self-schema norms. Bisexual men may develop an exceptional awareness of these cultural norms and behaviors through their observations

and experiences with men of different sexual orientation groups. This may be followed by development of their own distinctive pattern of desire and behaviors.

As they ultimately assume a bisexual orientation identity, bisexual men appear to pass through a process of change in their beliefs and values so that they are able to view their bisexual identity positively, affirm their sexual experiences, and allow for further social acceptance through the acting out of a new sexual script (Wilkerson et al., 2010). The onset and sequence of milestones of sexual identity may uniquely differ for bisexual individuals from other sexual minority individuals, given the inherent complexities in understanding and integrating attractions to both same- and other-sex partners. For example, as found in this study and other research, male bisexuals experience attraction, self-identification, and coming out later than later than gay men (Calzo, Antonucci, Mays, & Cochran, 2011). Additionally, bisexual men experienced conflict when they began to participate in sexual activities with other men that were inconsistent with the heterosexual scenarios in which they had spent significant parts of their lives (Wilkerson, Brooks, & Ross, 2010).

The unique elements of a bisexual male sexual orientation identity development process described by interviewees in this study seemed to be best represented by processes discussed by King (2011) in her research regarding bisexual/biracial individuals. The experiences of participants of this study may be best framed using the four elements involved in her proposed bisexual identity development process, including (1) confusion awareness, (2) parallel exploration relevant to context, (3) transitioning to safety, and (4) acceptance of dynamic identities. In the first phase, bisexual interviewees expressed confusion about their sexual identities as they became aware of their attractions

to same- and other-sex individuals. Second, they explored these identities as much as possible, given their individual backgrounds and the openness or freedom of their environment, including community, family, friends, and religion. Third, interviewees discussed finding sexual minority communities where they could find validation for their bisexual attractions and have access to resources and supportive others. Finally, participants accepted their chosen bisexual identity, while expressing an interest in continued growth and evolution of their identities.

As described by participants, an integral part of bisexual orientation identity awareness may include the creation of an alternative masculine gender identity. By separating from those elements of hegemonic masculinity that preclude homosexual attraction, bisexual men may create a more fluid gender identity. Bisexual men may be more likely than gay and heterosexual men to manifest their own variation of gender role behavior by blending elements of the heteronormativity in order to have access to social acceptance, as well as individual manifestations, such as a strong desire for emotional connection (Wilkerson et al., 2010). Men related the tension associated with pressures to incorporate gender roles that were consistent and inconsistent with their cognitive view of the sexual self. This repositioning of values and beliefs in order to resolve intrapersonal conflict may allow bisexual men's gender identity to change. This may be in part to accommodate relationships that maximize emotional intimacy.

Implications for the Sexual Self-Schema

Sexual expression, although in part biologically determined, is largely socially constructed. Little is known about the relationship between sexual self-schemas and

gender roles (Hill, 2007). This research used hegemonic masculinity to illustrate a social-cognitive map of the views of men's sexual selves. The sexual self-view of men in this study was affected by goals established by masculinity socialization translated to a sexual and romantic domain. Male participants' mental representations of themselves as sexual people were derived from past experience. These representations guide sexual behavior and are influential in processing sexually relevant social information (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994). Sexual self-schemas can project important sexual outcomes, as sexual self-schemas are related to sexual behavior and sexual responses (Cyranowski & Andersen, 1998).

Preliminary research by Andersen, Cyranowski, and Espindle (1999) regarding male sexual self-schemas consisted of a list of trait adjectives (e.g., passionate) ranked by university students that described "a sexual man." Three factors were deemed part of men's sexual selves: passionate/loving, powerful/aggressive, and open-minded/liberal. Men who scored high on the three factors compared to those who scored low considered themselves more sexual, more sexually arousable, and more willing to engage in casual sex. A major criticism of this scale was that subjects were asked simply to "describe yourself," and were not given any indication that what was being measured was one's own concept of himself as a sexual person. The traits listed for men included psychological trait-related adjectives; however, there are other dimensions that might be relevant when thinking of one's sexual self. Additionally, the scale included only three negative adjectives (i.e., conservative, reserved, and inexperienced), which potentially affected the finding that there was no negative factor in their sexuality rating. As a result, the men's sexual self-schema as established by Andersen and colleagues does not predict

sexual behavior (Aaresetad, 2000). In his studies using the rating scales as established by Andersen and colleagues, Hill (2007) concluded, "There must be more than three dimensions to a person's sexual self-schema" (p. 141).

In contrast to the quantitative studies described above, the current research asked men to describe themselves in terms of their sexual and romantic histories, as well as the histories of other men they knew. The research gathered negative and positive elements of men's behavior and attitudes, including how these had changed with experience, and detailed a gender- and racially-informed conceptualization of sexual and romantic processes. Previous research on men's sexual self-schemas focused on the individual abstracted from his context, which assumes the ability to objectively extract the participant from race, class, and social aspects. This model, however, is embedded in a feminist social constructionist paradigm that considers aspects of sociopolitical power. Male participants and the researchers deconstructed the power dynamics inherent in sexual self-schemas that are privileged by hegemonic masculinity and Whiteness, including issues of oppression, privilege, and gender role socialization (Morrow, 1992). Finally, this study moved toward articulating additional masculinities outside of heteromasculinity, including gay and bisexual gender identities and sexual self-schemas.

Data from this study suggest that, contrary to previous conceptualizations, a unified male sexual self-schema does not exist. Although there were sexual self-schema themes shared by two sexual orientation groups, there were no themes that united all interviewees. Each group described masculinity socialization effects that were unique to their sexual attitudes and behaviors. Even among members of the same sexual orientation

group, sexual self-schema elements varied by developmental phase, by experience and insight, and by cultural background.

Although there is a great deal missing from our current understanding of gay and bisexual men and their masculinity, this study seems to suggest that gay men adhere to hegemonic masculinity norms in relationships and sexual behavior, whereas bisexual men transcend them. Gay men, in order to overcome oppressive forces, find significance in adhering as much as possible to hegemonic masculinity (Baca Zinn, 1982; Estrada, Rigali-Oiler, Arciniega, & Tracey, 2011). This has been demonstrated in studies comparing gay and heterosexual behavior, wherein gay men appear to embody masculinity in a fashion structurally similar to their heterosexual counterparts (for example, Estrada et al., 2011; Kozak et al., 2009). Bisexual men, through various processes in their sexual orientation development, appear to have a higher degree of self-acceptance that liberates them from hegemonic masculinity (Clark, 1972).

This study responds to urgings that researchers examine the impact of masculinity on gay men (Sanchez et al., 2009). Some preliminary work has been done in this area. For example, it has been found that many gay men value traditional notions of masculinity and marginalize "effeminate" gay men (e.g., Bergling, 2001; Hines, 2009). This is most evident in the realm of gay men's sexual self-schemas, where dating and sex are concerned (Jeffries, 2009; Malebranche, Fields, Brayant, & Harper, 2009). Gay men scrutinize gender roles in themselves and in other gay men and participate in behaviors that will bolster their sense of masculinity (Skidmore, Linsenmeier, & Bailey, 2006). The majority of heterosexual sexual self-schemas articulated in this study overlap in the themes articulated by the gay participants, such as competition, aversion to emotional

expression and substitution of physical intimacy for emotional disclosure, and the role of objectification. It appears that traditional masculine ideals continue to play a prominent role within the gay community and that gay and heterosexual men have more sexual self-schema components in common than are exclusive to their sexual orientation. This suggests that, for gay and heterosexual men, socialized gender does not vary dramatically according to sexual orientation.

This study addresses a call by Steinman (2011) for empirically oriented research to investigate the relationship between masculinity and bisexuality. There is very little empirical research investigating gender performance and bisexual men; however, this study illustrates surprising results. In fact, the majority of bisexual participants' inclinations and behavior as documented in these results are foundationally at odds with traditional masculinity socialization. For example, although gay and heterosexual participants demonstrated manhood through inexpressiveness and substituting physical intimacy for emotional closeness, bisexual men did not manifest a similar masculine ideology. The desire for closeness expressed by interviewees produced a stable, bisexual masculine identity that is distinctive from gay and heterosexual masculinities.

It is quite possible that the bisexual men interviewed over-emphasized their hope for partner equality and idealized relationships that are in contrast with their actual lived experiences. In reality, bisexuals and their relationship partners may struggle to a greater degree than was reported in the negotiation of roles in their relationships in creating emotional intimacy and in overcoming objectification. Bisexual men interviewed may not express themselves to quite the degree that they reported or may not entirely refrain from nonrelational sex or avoid viewing pornography. However, their reports, however

idealized, differed almost completely from those of participants in other sexual

orientation identity categories. Bisexual men reported different standards of conventional

notions of gender in their relationships and sexual encounters with women and men, and

bisexual men experienced men and women partners differently. The majority of bisexual

men described mostly committed sexual encounters with women, but nonrelational sex

with men. They objectified women overtly, but kept their fantasies and observations

about men to themselves. This suggests that, for bisexual men, there exists a link between

sexuality and gender that deviates from heteronormative expectations. This deviation

from male role norms also encourages greater awareness of the constraints of dominant

masculinity for gay and heterosexual men. It may be that bisexual men experience not

only sexual fluidity, but gender fluidity as well, at least in terms of emotional

expressiveness.

<u>Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research</u>

This study possesses some limitations. The detailed descriptions of the themes of

men's sexual self-schemas are primarily behavioral, and it is unclear if the cognitive

elements of these schemas have been fully or effectively recorded. Mental schemas are

not fully knowable. For example, the content of these men's sexual fantasies is uncertain,

as were discussions of men's masturbation practices. The lack of these cognitive

elements may have been a result of the nature of the interview questions and their focus

on behavior. Future research may focus on these cognitions, men's sexual fantasies and

attractions, as well as men's private experiences viewing men's and women's bodies.

Exploration of these fantasies may also produce interesting multicultural data regarding the attractions of men of color.

Another shortcoming of this study involved having a sample that consisted of a generally younger group of men (the majority of participants were in their 20s and 30s). Hearing perspectives from different age groups would have enriched the results and highlighted differences and similarities between generations. For example, a sample of individuals from other age groups may have provided different insights into sexuality and relationships. More research is necessary, therefore, to understand to what extent age impacts sexual self-schemas.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are also tempered by its sampling strategy. For example, previous research has established that gay men recruited from gay community venues may differ from gay men recruited using probability sampling on relevant variables such as gay community affiliation and internalized homophobia (Meyer & Colten, 1999). It is also not yet known which recruitment strategies lead to more representative sampling of bisexual-identified men (Rosenthal et al., 2011). Those individuals who did participate may differ from those who received the recruitment announcements but chose not to participate across important variables, such as time constraints, life stress, career involvement, family responsibilities, and community involvement, although their relevance cannot be determined given the available information. Additionally, the self-selection of the sample may have introduced some commonalities among the participants, such as articulateness and level of education, that may have affected the outcome and inferences of the data. Selection bias

may have caused weaker support for an association than would a comparison set that included participants gathered from a wider range of sources (Collier & Mahoney, 1996).

As with any research design, there are limitations inherent in qualitative research. These limitations include the ability to generalize findings, variations in interpretation of the data, and the interpretative power of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). The procedure of data gathering and analysis in this study may have introduced bias. During data gathering, for example, the presentation of the theoretical model to the focus group at the beginning of the meeting may have biased the information provided by the focus group members. It will be important to replicate the findings of this research, including the use of quantitative approaches that would do justice to the complexity of men's sexual self-schemas. Qualitative and quantitative data can be combined to facilitate an improved understanding and generate new theory (Erzberger & Kelle, 2003).

The individual themes represented here offer many suggestions for further study. Especially salient are issues related to gay and bisexual men and emotional expressiveness. The socialized male tendency to experience reluctance in the expression of emotion is one of the strongest aspects of the traditional male role (O'Neil et al., 1995). Although men have the same basic emotional experiences as women (Jansz, 2000), men are less willing than women to express these emotions (Hill, 2007). More insight is needed into how gay men may come to equate inexpressiveness with attractiveness. Men in in this study were attracted to various hegemonic masculine behaviors and appearances and reported being attracted to "straight-acting" gay men. They may consider emotional inexpressiveness to be part of this masculine behavior and come to find restrictive emotional behavior as desirable. Level of expressiveness may

play a role in gay men choosing partners, at least in short-term contexts, who avoid communication or who appear emotionally aloof. It is also possible that gay men in relationships with a high level of emotional intimacy may seek out extra-relational partners in part because they are attracted to the masculine inexpressiveness of nonrelational sex.

An additional area that merits further investigation is how the socialization and development of bisexual men create a unique set of socialized masculinity norms. Attitudes and beliefs of the men in this sample suggest that bisexual men may experience masculinity differently from gay or heterosexual men. For example, perhaps most aberrant from gay and bisexual men is the degree to which bisexual men feel comfortable with and value emotional expressiveness. Perhaps bisexual men, because of their anxieties about their future relationships and the perception that they are publically misunderstood, prioritize emotional connection more than gay and heterosexual men. They may be willing to forgo masculine behavior in order to feel a much-needed sense of connection and understanding.

Further investigation is needed to assess ethnic differences in sexual self-schemas. For example, men of color face the dilemma of having to manage European American expectations of masculine behavior that differ from their minority cultural expectations (Stokes et al., 1998). If they follow their own cultural values, they may not be seen as tough, hard, and dominating, all of which are part of hegemonic, White masculinity. Moreover, racism limits their ability to succeed in terms of majority expectations for status and achievement. With their masculinity threatened on two fronts, the importance of adhering to masculine sexual and relationship norms increases in order to prove

masculinity. For bisexual men of color, for example, even if one is attracted to men, maintaining some sort of sexual relationship with women is important. Gay and bisexual men of color may be less likely to move to gay communities because it may expose them to potential racism and risk of losing their most important source of support, their extended family. As a result, many sexual minority men of color may choose to live near family and downplay their sexual orientation, finding other sexual minority men where they can, often in bars or online.

<u>Implications for Practice</u>

This research presents a paradigm that describes the ways men are taught to think about sex, sexuality, relating to their romantic partners, and peer relationships with men (Brooks, 2005). Although the topic of this research is sexual self-schemas of men, the themes here described encompass a web of behavior, beliefs, and thoughts that may help to put many mental health difficulties into context. These patterns of behavior and thought should be addressed because they are oppressive toward women and other men. Those who counsel men should be concerned about the effects these behaviors and attitudes have on men's mental health. Men may feel unmanly when they are unable to live up to these standards of masculinity and may compensate by substituting unhealthy coping strategies for true intimacy. Sexualization and objectification of women may serve as a compensation for what they feel they lack (Brooks, 1998).

There are many topics of discussion suggested by this study that therapists may pursue to alter a gay or bisexual man's approach to his relationships and caring for himself. For example, if men were more capable of fulfilling their own emotional needs,

they would not be so pursuant of sex for its own sake (Levant, 1995). Additionally, the pressure placed on sexual minority men to adhere to hegemonic masculinity increases their risk for multiple health issues, including depression, anxiety, substance use, and sexual risk behaviors (Meyer, 2003). A sense of differentness from other male peers often occurs before adulthood, when young men do not necessarily have the skills and resources to cope with such adversity.

There are also many topics suggested here for training clinicians in working with sexual minority men. First, due to the striking gap in the literature regarding ethical practice of psychotherapy with bisexual men, there is an urgent need for understanding bisexual male clients (Bieschke et al., 2007). This research, as well as other studies (Israel & Mohr, 2004; Rust, 2002), indicates that attitudes and stereotypes regarding bisexual individuals differ in both intensity and content from those regarding gay men. Bisexuality is more likely than other sexual orientations to be viewed as unstable or a sign of maladjustment (for example, a defense against being gay), and bisexuals are often stereotyped as nonmonogamous and susceptible to infidelity. Studies have indicated that a male client presenting as bisexual primes clinicians' stereotypes regarding his orientation as related to his problem, including focusing on sexual orientation identity development and sexual dysfunction (Morh, Weiner, Chopp, & Wong, 2009). Therapists' tendencies to use confirmatory hypothesis testing strategies in clinical decision making may increase the risk of applying sexual orientation stereotypes to a client, even when the stereotypes do not accurately characterize the client (Pfeiffer, Whelan, & Martin, 2000).

A second implication for training clinicians may be to discuss the stereotypes they and others hold about people of different sexual orientations and to identify ways that

these stereotypes may influence case conceptualizations (Mohr et al., 2009). Some therapists may have difficulty identifying stereotypes because of discomfort exploring and acknowledging personal biases. It may be helpful to emphasize stereotype formation as a normal cognitive process and to find ways of considering the possibility of bias, even in cases in which trainees may have great confidence in their impartiality. Clinicians should also recognize that not all issues a client has are related to his bisexual or gay feelings or behaviors (Matteson, 1996).

Third, rather than focusing on whether a client is gay, bisexual, or heterosexual, it may be more helpful for clinicians to focus on various aspects of a client's attraction to men or to women, as illustrated in this study, including sexual behavior, fantasy, and emotional intimacy. If a client uses categorical labels like "bisexual" or "gay," help him explore what these identities mean to him. Coming out as gay or bisexual is not necessarily the desired end point for everyone, and failure to come out or adopt a gay identity may not be a reflection of shame or internalized homophobia. Given the masculinity expectations mentioned in this study, delaying coming out or determining not to transition into a gay self-identity may be an empowering, adaptive, and mentally healthy decision (Stokes et al., 1999).

Fourth, given the high level of body dissatisfaction among gay and bisexual men, it would appear that male body image is an essential element to include in clinical work with gay and bisexual men. It may be critical to assess for body fat dissatisfaction and muscle dissatisfaction in regard to concerns that include depression, eating restraint, and eating concerns among gay men. It may be clinically relevant for clinicians to discuss the

impact of masculine ideals on gay men's self-image and explore how standards of attraction endorsed in gay communities affect them.

Fifth, based on comments by interviewees about open relationships, it is suggested that practitioners be more adaptable with issues of monogamy and extra-dyadic sex, as well as consider the social contexts in which gay and bisexual couples function that may be different from those of heterosexuals (Bonello & Cross, 2012). An appreciation of the diverse perceptions of commitment and intimacy (for example, the discernment of emotional versus physical intimacy) is important in order to understand gay and bisexual men's relationships, as well as counter potential heterosexist bias in practitioners. Extra-relational sex may serve several functions in some gay and bisexual monogamous relationships and should not be pathologized. It is suggested that clinicians avoid seeing gay and bisexual men in a way that conflates casual sex with dysfunction when these men present with difficulties around monogamy. It is important that therapists explore, rather, if these relationship structures suit their needs, whether emotional or sexual.

Sixth, although only a minority of participants in this study said that they felt that pornography was dysfunctional to establishing healthy intimacy and relationships, due to to widely accepted and culturally embedded use of pornography in gay culture, it may be helpful to discuss with gay clients the effects of pornography on gay men's attitudes toward themselves and others. Clients' presenting problems may be affected by underlying messages in pornography, such as muscularity, Whiteness, and focus on anal sex. It may be helpful to address how these images have affected expectations of their own body, others' bodies, and sexual practices.

Finally, it is critical for clinicians who work with men to understand mental health concerns in the context of masculinity socialization. Given these findings, it appears key to assess ideas about masculinity and how these concerns play a role in client's concern. Gay and bisexual men may experience gender role conflicts because of negative feedback they receive from a dominant socioculture that does not reinforce diversity in sexual orientations (Simonsen et al., 2000). It may be important to ask clients how ideas about masculinity affect current concerns about finances, work/school, and interpersonal relationships. For example, gender nonconformity in youth may have caused gay and bisexual adult men to feel alienated from parents or peers and may lead to ongoing social anxiety (Isay, 1989).

Therapy can be a catalyst to the process of men transforming their definitions of masculinity. The therapist can be the major determinant in directing how the client's life situation unfolds and how his presenting issues are interpreted, but only if the therapist is aware of where her or his client's concerns are originating. Many of men's difficulties originate in this socialized sexual distortion (Pridal, 2001). Sexuality is perverted into phallocentric sexuality rather than allowed to blossom into a mode by which to establish connection not only with their partners, but also connection with their families, peers, and with their own bodies (Kiselica, Mule, & Haldeman, 2008).

If we can, as therapists, help use the transformative possibilities of these life experiences, rather than cause them to fail by virtue of problematic sexual socialization, we will be able to support men who are in trouble. The therapist who is best prepared to help men move in this direction is a gender-informed therapist (Good, Gilbert, & Scher, 1990). These therapists can be aware that, although men may behave otherwise, the dark

side of masculinity is often a cover for deep wounds. If a therapist lacks this awareness, she or he may unwittingly reinforce the same values (Frankel, 2004). The therapist may treat a man's symptoms rather than the root of these symptoms: a dysfunctional pattern of interrelating. The therapist can use this moment of anxiety, distress, or depression as an opportunity for a paradigm shift rather than reinforcing traditional male sexual socialization (Good & Sherrod, 2001).

Approaches that do not address the root of the difficulty, gender role socialization, only achieve first-order change. Approaches to therapy that do not undermine men's efforts to enact isolation and emotional withdrawal may also result in the client feeling rejected, which may result in establishing the destructive behavior even more strongly. If the therapist is informed regarding this syndrome, he or she will help the client to truly connect the challenges he is having back to the patterns of behavior established at the beginning (Brooks, 1995). Therapists have the possibility to help men question the way they have been evaluating their lives and aid in effecting a second-order change: transforming his way of connecting, rather than simply making pain temporarily dissipate (Brooks, 1998; Brooks & Good, 2001; Scher, Stevens, Good, & Eichenfield, 1987).

<u>Implications for Social Justice</u>

Research that describes men's relationships with themselves, with other men, and with women has social and political implications. Kimmel (2001) was concerned about social change when he wrote, "To speak of transforming masculinity is to begin with the way men are sexual in our culture" (p. 541). The meanings men make of sexuality are a powerful indication of the cultural meanings that are attached to men in our culture.

Cultural and Political Change

Because this research is conducted from a feminist constructionist perspective, I believe that the most effective change strategies must begin at the sociocultural level. This is difficult to begin, but extremely powerful once it has begun. Although there appears to be an increase in the amount of attention and concern raised when men misbehave violently and sexually, there continue to be myriad images of men in the media and in everyday life that suggest otherwise. These images include men bullying other men, an extreme focus on sex, and avoidance of difficult emotions. The men who engage in these patterns are not aberrant, but are merely conforming to the scripts described in this study.

But the possibilities for change are promising, and gay and bisexual men demonstrate a great deal of strength and resilience. For approximately 40 years, sexual minority men have been part of one of the most impressive and effective campaigns for civil rights in history, all while facing community-wide devastation from the HIV epidemic and widespread use of recreational drugs generally perceived to be addictive (Mills, Taul, Stall, et al, 2004). Despite cultural marginalization, seventy-seven percent of gay and bisexual men avoid engaging in high-risk sexual behaviors (Stall, Friedman, & Catania, 2008), and most gay men avoid problematic drug use (Mills et al., 2004). Taking advantage of naturally occurring strengths and resilience could improve social change efforts by capitalizing on the skills, resources, and strengths that already exist among gay and bisexual men.

Men's efforts to create change will be facilitated by those in the mental health field. In order to create cultural change, gender-informed clinicians need to find a way to be heard publically. This will dramatically expand the focus beyond isolated incidents of sexual misbehavior to attention to problems in the socialization of all men. Normative male socialization contributes to nonrelational sexuality, sexual addition, promiscuity, and sexual abuse and harassment (Brooks & Levant, 1997).

Beyond changing culture, there are legal and legislative methods to changing men's behavior. These include heightened awareness of sexually transmitted infections and more effective rehabilitation for those charged with sexual harassment, soliciting a prostitute, or having sex in a public space. Attitude change in some cases can follow behavioral changes. Programs that force men to curb their behavior may protect victims and may also produce significant changes in men.

The Impact of New Definitions of Masculinity

When it comes to making change, many individual men continue to feel they are without power (Tatum, 1997). As mental health professionals, we can encourage men to recognize choices and make changes. Rather than providing a temporary fix and sending men back out into a system of advantage based on destructive behavior, there is a need to encourage men to examine the keystone of their definitions of manhood. There is a responsibility to consider other possibilities and new definitions (Kimmel, 1996).

This social justice does not mean androgyny or the absence of sex. It means an understanding that a man's sexual desire and the sexual desire of his partner are equally

valuable. It means matching values and principles with men's daily lives. Sexual democracy, like political democracy, is about having an equal voice in decision-making.

Kimmel (1996) described a "battle," or the necessary social justice that would bring about a new definition of masculinity for a new century:

> The American manhood of the future cannot be based on obsessive self-control, defensive exclusion, or frightened escape. We need a new definition of masculinity for a new century. . . . A definition that centers around standing up for justice and equality instead of running away from commitment and engagement. We need a democratic manhood. This will not be a noisy or violent revolutionary transformation but the result of countless quiet daily struggles by American men to free themselves from the burdens of proof. . . . Only then can we American men come home from our wars, heal our wounds, and breathe a collective sigh of relief. (pp. 334-335)

The sexual self-schema may be used for a variety of social change projects. First, safer sex programs would be bolstered by emphasizing new definitions of masculinity. As a sexual minority male, questions and doubts about one's masculinity or manhood may be associated with participation in sexual risk behaviors (Diaz, 1998; Levine, 1998). Young men who are questioning or struggling with their masculinity may over-compensate or attempt to prove their masculinity by adopting and enacting risky sexual behaviors they perceive as being associated with masculinity. Although current HIV behavioral prevention interventions reduce HIV risk taking by approximately one third (Herbst et al., 2005), greater impact is needed to alter the current trends in infection rates among gay and bisexual men. Many approaches to prevention programs for sexually transmitted infections emphasize an underlying assumption that men who have contracted sexually-transmitted infections are flawed or are deficit of the skills and/or abilities needed to prevent HIV (Herrick, Lim, Wei, Smith, Guadamuz, Friedman, & Stall, 2011). For example, some of the intervention aims are based on the assumption that men don't

know how to use condoms, do not know how to negotiate safe sex practices with their partner, or have unhealthy peer norms. But unsafe sexual practices are inextricably linked to the male sexual self-schema. Men may use risk-taking in sex as a form of masculinity performance, and it will be important that HIV prevention efforts incorporate issues of masculinity and identity into their interventions. For example, because of the emphasis on physical rather than emotional intimacy, men may engage in unsafe sex because it gives them a feeling of emotional closeness. Additionally, safe sex appears to be feminine, rather than risky, sexy, exciting, and manly. Gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men could learn to incorporate responsibility and care for their sexual partners into the definition of masculinity. Social change agents must acknowledge the multiple layers of powerful social messages and expectations related to masculinity that sexual minority men experience. Such interventions should help bisexual and gay men identify and critically analyze these potentially damaging messages and to understand how such messages can serve as a form of social oppression that may impact their health and well-being (Wilson et al., 2010). This can include a psychoeducational approach to develop critical thinking skills and critical consciousness by analyzing messages in popular culture related to gender (Wilson et al, 2010).

New definitions of masculinity that diminish risk, danger, and promiscuity may also put sex into the context of a committed relationship. A relationship makes sex safer. A committed relationship makes sex predictable, in terms of a consistent partner. This may also allow men to find their sexuality heightening when they are in long-term partnerships, not when they are able to have the most frequent sex with the most partners.

A second suggestion for social justice intervention targets young men. Sexual prejudice is a culture-wide phenomenon, and homonegative messages and actions begin at a young age. Without access to social support and acceptance during this period, young men may internalize negative attitudes toward sexual minorities and eventually develop mental and behavioral health problems. Family supports and school programs such as Gay/Straight Alliances could help young gay and bisexual men fend off the negative effects of bullying or institutionalized homophobia.

Community-based interventions may also be particularly helpful in building social support with other young sexual minority men who may also be struggling with expanding definitions of traditional masculinity and sexual orientation identity. Building connections with mentors and supportive others in the community can offer a venue for young sexual minority men to discuss and analyze their various identities and connections in a safe environment (Davidson, 2006). Such programs may work with community centers, and families and school personnel can be integrated into such social action in order to understand the powerful influence families and can have on perceptions regarding masculinity and sexuality. Community programs and mental health services that promote healthy coping strategies minimize the effects of overt homophobia and marginalization that often lead to addictive behaviors, objectification of other men, and lack of support for the development of long-term relationships.

Finally, there is a need for raised awareness of power inequalities for gay and bisexual men of color and an integration of these men into political and social agendas. Despite the growing visibility of sexual minority communities of color, the mainstream gay community organizes itself along racial and ethnic lines, and its political aspirations

remain primarily White. Because of these divisions, it seems there are multiple gay communities with respect to resources and representation rather than one uniform social entity. Social change must highlight the existence of power imbalances among gay communities (Epstein, 1999). It has been pointed out, for example, that the HIV epidemic only became important only once those infected included White, middle-class men with a degree of political clout and fund-raising capacity (Epstein, 1996). Political agendas should take into account more than simply marriage equality, which many see as primarily the concern of White gay men who want to appear more "normal."

Recognizing racial stereotypes as a social phenomenon within the gay community may begin with changes in media representation. Images of Whiteness have been used to lend the gay community an air of respectability and affluence in the eyes of policy-makers, and images of men of color are almost absent in gay publications (Vaid, 1995). For example, Latino gay men are represented primarily as musicians, and Black men appear primarily in ads for HIV medications (Teunis, 2007). Men of color express the sense that Whiteness prevails and they are not welcome to participate fully in gay communities (Teunis, 2007).

LGBT social action efforts must address the primary concerns of those who are non-White or poor. These actions can be as simple as welcoming minority individuals into neighborhoods or workplaces, posting "safe zone" signs, or talking to gay people of color about the barriers or attitudes they face and providing interpersonal support. Social justice efforts to fight racism and classism can also take more organized paths, including joining or forming a coalition to work against racism or advocating for resources. These organizations can share information and resources, as well as work together with other

organizations and initiate political actions, such as combating harassment by security personnel, housing discrimination, defense of immigrant and refugee rights, documenting and publishing articles about racist activities in one's gay community, letter-writing or petition campaigns, or attending events supporting multiculturalism.

In Conclusion

In summary of what I have learned throughout this investigation, I have concluded that the principles described here do not appear to be about men's sexual self-schemas. It is about the perversion of men's humanity by channeling everything that is basic to them into sex. This study also represents the potential men have, as human beings, to achieve another way of being, a way of living that promotes mental health. It is time to increase awareness and begin reconstruction of men's concepts surrounding sex and connection.

INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW

The Centerfold Syndrome: Theorizing Male Sexual Self-Schemas

THANK YOU for considering taking part in our study on men's relationships with men and women.

BACKGROUND
You are being asked to take part in a research study on the views of men regarding their relationships and how they see other men dealing with their romantic relationships. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you want to volunteer to take part in this study.

The purpose of this study is to learn from heterosexual, gay and bisexual men, ages 18 and above, about their views, concerns, and experiences with men and women (emotional, spiritual, and/or physical), and how they perceive other men relating with men and women. We hope to use this research to inform service providers about the experiences and needs of gay and bisexual men. The research is being done by a graduate student from the University of Utah in Counseling Psychology.

STUDY PROCEDURE
Your participation in this study will take from 1 to 2 hours, and if you decide you want to take part in the discussion group described below, it will involve an additional 2 or more hours of your time, for a total of 4-6 hours maximum. You will be asked to:
> ➢ Take part in an individual interview in which you will be asked about your thoughts, feelings, plans, and concerns regarding relationships with men and women ~ 1 - 2 hours. For example, for gay men an interview question will be, "How do you see other gay men dealing with their relationships with men (emotional, physical, spiritual)?" And for bisexual men, an interview question will be, "How do you see other bisexual men dealing with their relationships with women (emotional, physical, spiritual)?" "How do you see them dealing with their relationships with men?" The interview will be audio recorded.
> ➢ Be available for a follow-up interview up to 30 minutes, which will also be audio recorded.
> ➢ Optional: Take part in a series of 2-hour discussion groups with other men to further explore issues in relationships. So that the researchers will know who was talking in the group, the group will be audio recorded.

RISKS

The risks of taking part in this study are considered minimal. It is possible that you may feel upset thinking about or talking about personal information related to your relationships. These risks are similar to those you experience when discussing personal information with others. If you feel upset from this experience, you can tell the researcher, and he will tell you about resources available to help. If you participate in the discussion group, there is no way for the researchers to guarantee that the information you share will be kept private by other members. We will discuss this with all participants in the effort to assure confidentiality.

BENEFITS

We cannot promise any direct benefit for taking part in this study. However, our experience is that having the opportunity to talk about these kinds of issues may result in increased self-awareness and positive feelings about sharing your thoughts and feelings with other people and the possibility of sharing information that will help others. It may also result in greater clarity about your own later-life planning. You will be provided with a list of resources that may be helpful to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information you share will be kept confidential. Tapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected computer located in the researcher's work space. Only the researcher will have access to this information. Your information will be assigned a code name (which you may choose if you wish), which will be kept with your interview, discussion group, and discussion forum information. In publications, only your code name will be used, and every effort will be made to protect your identity by removing identifying information from quotes, etc., that are used in publication.

Although the researcher can guarantee that we will keep all information you share confidential, it is possible that participants in the optional discussion group or discussion forum might share information about you with others. We will discuss this with all participants in the effort to assure confidentiality. The only other exception to our guarantee of confidentiality is if you share actual or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child, or a disabled or elderly adult. In this case, the researchers must report this to the most appropriate agency in your state.

The following are legal exceptions to your right to confidentiality. I will inform you of any time when I think I will have to put these into effect.

1. If I have good reason to believe that you are abusing or neglecting a child or vulnerable adult, or if you give me information about someone else who is doing this, I must inform Child Protective Services within 48 hours and Adult Protective Services immediately.
2. If I believe that you are in imminent danger of harming yourself, I may break confidentiality and call the police or the county crisis team. I am not obligated to do this, and would explore all other options with you before I took this step. If at that point you were unwilling to guarantee your safety, I would call the crisis team.

PERSON TO CONTACT
If you have questions, complaints, or concerns about this study, or if you feel you have been harmed by taking part in the research, you can contact William Elder by e-mail at William.Elder@utah.edu; however, you should be aware that e-mail is not a confidential form of communication. You may also contact him at 801-581-8094, Monday-Friday from 8 am to 5 pm. In addition, if you feel you cannot discuss any issues of concern with the researcher, you may contact his advisor, Dr. Sue Morrow, 801-581-3400, sue.morrow@utah.edu.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints or concerns which you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator. The University of Utah IRB may be reached by phone at (801) 581-3655 or by e-mail at irb@hsc.utah.edu.

Research Participant Advocate: You may also contact the Research Participant Advocate (RPA) by phone at (801) 581-3803 or by email at participant.advocate@hsc.utah.edu.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. If you decide not to take part, or if you withdraw from the study after starting, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits of any kind, nor will it affect your relationship with the researcher. If you decide to stop after you have agreed to participate, just inform the researcher. We will destroy your interview tape and any transcripts we have made. If you withdraw after taking part in the discussion group, the tape will not be destroyed, but all of your participation will be erased from the transcript of the group.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS
There should typically not be any costs to you for participating in this study. There will be a $10 payment for your participation in this study. There will also be a $10 compensation for your participation in the optional two-hour discussion group.

CONSENT
By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read the information in this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Printed Name of Researcher

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

INFORMED CONSENT FOR FOCUS GROUP

The Centerfold Syndrome: Theorizing Male Sexual Self-Schemas

THANK YOU for considering taking part in our study on men's romantic relationships.

BACKGROUND
You are being asked to take part in a research study on the views of heterosexual, gay, and bisexual men their romantic relationships and how they see other men dealing with their romantic relationships. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you want to volunteer to take part in this study.

The purpose of this study is to learn from heterosexual, gay and bisexual men, ages 18 and above, about their views, concerns, and experiences with women and men (emotional, spiritual, and/or physical), and how they perceive other men relating with women and men. We hope to use this research to inform service providers about the experiences and needs of gay and bisexual men. The research is being done by a graduate student from the University of Utah in Counseling Psychology.

STUDY PROCEDURE
You have participated in an interview for this study and have chosen to participate in an optional focus ground. Participation in this focus group will take 1 ½ to 2 hours. During this discussion you will asked to:
> ➢ Take part in a 2-hour discussion group with other gay or bisexual men to further explore issues in relationships with women. For example, a sample discussion question will be, "How do you see men dealing with their relationships with women, both friendships and romantic relationships?" The group discussion will be audio recorded.

RISKS
The risks of taking part in this study are considered minimal. It is possible that you may feel upset thinking about or talking about personal information related to your relationships. These risks are similar to those you experience when discussing personal information with others. If you feel upset from this experience, you can tell the researcher, and he will tell you about resources available to help. If you participate in the discussion group, there is no way for the researchers to guarantee that the information you share will be kept private by other members. We will discuss this with all participants in the effort to assure confidentiality.

BENEFITS

We cannot promise any direct benefit for taking part in this study. However, our experience is that having the opportunity to talk about these kinds of issues may result in increased self-awareness and positive feelings about sharing your thoughts and feelings with other people and the possibility of sharing information that will help others. It may also result in greater clarity about your own later-life planning. You will be provided with a list of resources that may be helpful to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information you share will be kept confidential. Tapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected computer located in the researcher's work space. Only the researcher will have access to this information. Your information will be assigned a code name (which you may choose if you wish), which will be kept with your interview, discussion group, and discussion forum information. In publications, only your code name will be used, and every effort will be made to protect your identity by removing identifying information from quotes, etc., that are used in publication.

Although the researchers can guarantee that we will keep all information you share confidential, it is possible that participants in the optional discussion group or discussion forum might share information about you to others. We will discuss this with all participants in the effort to assure confidentiality. The only other exception to our guarantee of confidentiality is if you share actual or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child, or a disabled or elderly adult. In this case, the researchers must report this to the most appropriate agency in your state.

The following are exceptions to your right to confidentiality. I would inform you of any time when I think I will have to put these into effect.

1. If I have good reason to believe that you are abusing or neglecting a child or vulnerable adult, or if you give me information about someone else who is doing this, I must inform Child Protective Services within 48 hours and Adult Protective Services immediately.

2. If I believe that you are in imminent danger of harming yourself, I may break confidentiality and call the police or the county crisis team. I am not obligated to do this, and would explore all other options with you before I took this step. If at that point you were unwilling to take steps to guarantee your safety, I would call the crisis team.

PERSON TO CONTACT

If you have questions, complaints, or concerns about this study, or if you feel you have been harmed by taking part in the research, you can contact William Elder by e-mail at William.Elder@utah.edu; however, you should be aware that e-mail is not a confidential form of communication. You may also contact him at 801-581-8094, Monday-Friday from 8 am to 5 pm. In addition, if you feel you cannot discuss any issues of concern with the researcher, you may contact his advisor, Dr. Sue Morrow, 801-581-3400, sue.morrow@utah.edu.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints or concerns which you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator. The University of Utah IRB may be reached by phone at (801) 581-3655 or by e-mail at irb@hsc.utah.edu.

Research Participant Advocate: You may also contact the Research Participant Advocate (RPA) by phone at (801) 581-3803 or by email at participant.advocate@hsc.utah.edu.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. If you decide not to take part, or if you withdraw from the study after starting, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits of any kind, nor will it affect your relationship with the researchers. If you decide to stop after you have agreed to participate, just inform one of the researchers. We will destroy your interview recording and any transcripts we have made. If you withdraw after taking part in the discussion group, the digital recording will not be destroyed, but all of your participation will be erased from the transcript of the group.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS
There should typically not be any costs to you for participating in this study. There will be a $10 payment for your participation in this focus group.

CONSENT
By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read the information in this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Printed Name of Researcher

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEWEE DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Participant Information Form
Name:_____**Phone**:_____
_____
Address:_____
_____
Email:_____
Age:_____**Birth Date**:_____

Ethnic Group: (Please circle)   African-American/Black   Asian
Pacific Islander   Mexican-American/Hispanic   Indian/Native
American
Caucasian   Other_____

Sexual/Affectional Orientation: Bisexual   Heterosexual   Gay
Other_____

Partner Status: Single   Married   Divorced
Committed Nonmarital Relationship   Other_____

Out?_____ (If out to some, please specify to whom you are/are not out):
_____

Education:_____

Your
Occupation:_____

Spiritual/Religious Orientation:
Current_____Past_____

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