

Austin Uteda

**Young Gay Adults' Personal Engagement with Contemporary Hookup Culture Through  
the Use of Mobile Apps**

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**Thesis Advisor**

Dr. Ruth Hickerson – Department of Communication

**Thesis Committee**

Dr. Cindy H. White – Department of Communication

Dr. Matthew Brown – Department of Sociology

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## Abstract

A rising rate of young gay and bisexual male adults are appropriating gay online dating technologies, specifically through the medium of mobile applications, as the main form of meeting other men like themselves. Judgements or stances on these online applications commonly insinuate that they are used for casual and immediate gratifications through the act of a sexual hookup. This study addresses how young homosexual men are personally engaging and understanding their use of gay mobile applications. The study employs a qualitative and interpretive method of research through using one-on-one interviews. This study recruited twelve men aged 18-26 to provide their thoughts and accounts of their downloaded mobile dating apps and how their meeting with other users online transpired in person. Findings from the interviews indicate that gay mobile apps are more than just a place to meet with someone for sexual intentions, but rather a place of numerously communicated on goings. Communication not only takes place through the form of online written language, but also through self-presented identity in the exchange of photos with other users. Findings reveal that the apps serve as a geographically location based space of possibly fulfilling meaningful interpersonal connections. This replaces the former need for young adults to solely rely on physically labeled gay institutions for meeting others. The conclusions of this study expose the importance gay mobile apps have on the young adult community in meeting men who are seeking men, and the varying reasons they have for doing so.

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**Literature Review & Rationale****Introduction**

The state of contemporary dating and dating etiquette among young adults is extremely different than it was only a few years ago. There is an evident change in how others identify and discuss their interactions, courtings, or hangouts with one another. These dating practice modifications continue to change at a seemingly fast and often unmeasured rate. This evolution that is now seen in dating practices can be wholly attributed to the increasingly important role of the internet in personal lives. Dating sites and mobile apps in particular are rapidly becoming the leaders in fostering young adults to create new connections with others. Large amounts of young adults are beginning to download and use these mobile apps for a multitude of reasons. At this moment of change in modern dating, it is crucial to examine how young gay adults are utilizing these new forms of dating networks. As this population is often overlooked from communicative research that has been taken place on these online networks.

Male homosexual individuals use these online resources much differently than their heterosexual peers. Dating sites and apps are one of the primary ways young gay adults personally depend on meeting up with other gay men. More young adults now have the opportunity to meet others through these online sites more so than they had in the past. Prior to the incorporation of the internet into dating services, gay men had to rely on other venues to meet others. This primarily meant frequenting homosexually labeled institutions such as: LGBTQ resource centers, adult bookstores, bars, and male bathhouses. These former avenues gay men resorted to use in order to have the options to meet others, was not always accessible for some, due to geographic regions, and in many instances, individuals felt uncomfortable for varying

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reasons in using them. This made it particularly difficult for men who were not out of the closet, to participate or visit these gay locations. Gay online apps and sites allow gay men of all backgrounds to meet others like themselves. One theme that still remains intact from the internet transition into gay dating life, is an expectation of sex. This adult activity is a state of mind many gay men evoke when meeting others. This sexual consciousness makes navigating the landscape of gay life murky for those who might not be seeking a one-night stand, or a no strings attached situation.

I have been a part of this shifting dating environment my same age range peers and I have embarked on. My personal interest in this subject is that I have downloaded and used these dating apps for my own use in the past. While using these sites I have found that a fair amount of my own experiences on them, largely echoes some research that has been conducted on these networks. This is especially seen in the dyadic factor that these mobile sites and apps bring to their users. In that both enjoyment and potential anxiety arise when using them. I downloaded the application, Grindr, when I was 18 years old. I was immediately immersed into a world created by homosexual men with user based images, dialect, and expectations continuously being exchanged. All of which I had never encountered nor heard of before using the app. I had no expectations when downloading this app, and if anything, I primarily wanted to use it to chat with others. I knew pretty quickly however, that the majority of the site's users were looking for a hookup. When I was on the app I saw how others had consciously presented themselves online. Some men had a completely filled out profile: with a bio, a picture of themselves, and they had stated what they were looking for. While others on the other end of this profile completeness spectrum had a completely blank profile. Grindr lists the following options for their users to

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choose from in what they are looking for on the site. With the options being: chat, dates, friends, networking, relationship, and right now.

From my own experiences and some of the research that has been conducted on sites like Grindr, and its many similar apps, there is multiple communication phenomenon's occurring at once (Penney, 2014). While researchers are beginning to analyze and explicate some of these online communications among heterosexual populations, it does not transcribe over to homosexual users. It is important to acknowledge the differences between these two sets of young adults. This recognition can be achieved in terms of noting how and why young gay adults are using these online sites and apps. Most recent research on gay adults and their use of online dating and mobile apps is primarily focused on gathering quantitative data. This data touches on some of the fields I am interested in, but does not go far enough in terms of garnering personal users form of engagement with gay sites and apps to meet others.

### **Understanding Hookup Culture**

In today's society, hookup culture is a relationship experience that is highly visible and practiced among young adults. Garcia, Reiber, Massey, and Merriwether (2012) define a hookup as a brief uncommitted sexual encounter among individuals who are not romantic partners nor are they dating each other. Researcher, Kathleen Bogle (2007) examined the major findings conducted on hooking up and its effects on young adults, especially those of whom are college students. Over the past 60 years there has been a noticeable shift from more traditional forms of courting and pursuing romantic relationships, to more casual hookups becoming the norm (Bogle, 2007). While the age of puberty in modern times has dramatically dropped at an unprecedented rate, young adults are now physiologically able to reproduce, but not



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psychologically ready to start a family (Bogle, 2007) Scholars argue that those who are in the age category of emerging adulthood (18-28) are postponing their pursuits of long-term romance (Arnold, 2010). This is also seen as the age of getting married in the United States being greatly pushed back to a later time in adult life (Arnold, 2010). Factors such as available online technologies are also attributing to the rise in rates of hookups between young adults. Hookups are greatly changing the quality and nature of later in life committed relationships. Scholars find the root of this trend, which largely promotes a more permissive and frequent rate of young adult hookups, can be traced to socially evolving sexual scripts (Garcia et al., 2012).

College students are especially aware and engaged in hookup culture. Arnold (2010), who examines sexual identity development among young adults in college, finds that social practices and norms occurring within undergrad peer culture are especially important in understanding the influence peer pressure has over students. These shared social practices on college campuses frequently include hooking up with fellow classmates without any perceivable immediate and serious social repercussions. These mainly refer to an absence of receiving harsh criticism from others for being casually romantic with one's fellow peers. College students believe that hooking up will make them accepted among their collegiate cohorts (Bogle, 2007). Bogle (2007) ties this behavior to emerging adulthood identity development, and notes that college undergrads are consumed with making friends and being admired by others. She finds that students will engage in traits of superficial niceness to conform to what their surrounding peers are doing, to ultimately gain social respectability. Students in college are aware of and accept the social notion that true adult life and its accompanying responsibilities, are postponed while in school. The perception that there are no consequences in hooking up, prepares them for

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future committed sexual relationships (Arnold, 2010). This has altering consequences on the nature and quality of potential long term relationships.

An important feature supporting hookup connections among college students and young adults is the usage of online dating sites and apps. Albright (2008) completed a wide-scale survey of over 15,000 respondents who were active in using online dating sites to pursue instant casual connections. She found that both men and women view the internet as an easy way to find willing sexual partners. Within this realm of online internet dating networks, certain sites (and the more recently popular use of mobile apps) have different connotations and intended social rules associated with them. More traditional dating sites, like OkCupid, are typically used to pursue serious, long-term relationships rather than short-term connections. This type of site allows users to complete detailed profiles and matches users together based on complex algorithms, derived from personality and lifestyle traits. This largely differentiates these types of sites from other apps that are intended purely for meeting and hooking up, such as Tinder which is frequently used by both heterosexual and homosexual young adults alike (Penney, 2014).

What differentiates Tinder, and its many hookup app duplicates, from more customary dating apps and sites is that Tinder is purely photo driven. Within Tinder there is no requirement or advocacy among its users to share their personal interests, experiences, or desired characteristics in a romantic partner. Instead Tinder users are shown photos on the currently viewed profile, in which the user needs to make the immediate decision to either swipe right (to like) or swipe left (to dislike) the profile. From this point on, if both users have liked one another, a match has occurred, and users now have the option to begin communicating (Hobbs, Owen, & Gerber, 2016). According to Tinder's co-founder, Sean Rad, Tinder was designed to take the stress and time out of dating. More specifically Tinder was purposed to become a

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'game' of less emotional investments to casually date and interact with others (Duguay, 2016). This is seen in the app's software, where user's profiles are similar to a deck of playing cards, where love, sex, and intimacy are the stakes of the game (Hobbs, Owen, & Gerber, 2016). Tinder specifically attracts young, white, and middle to upper class users through the app's marketing strategies, which promote the possibilities of creating desirable relationship partners for its users (Duguay, 2016). As the majority of Tinder's target markets are in fact college students within the emerging adulthood phase of their life, it's important to recognize that their identities are still vulnerable and being developed. This transpires into a technological desire to be well 'liked' i.e. swiped right by others (Arnold, 2010). Modern dating sites and apps create a virtual space in which one's online presence is not a direct expression of an individual's "inner self" or one that you can "truly know." Instead it's a highly-mediated user aesthetic that promotes instant and casual meet ups (Roach, 2015). This means that only the shallowest of user attributes are conveyed on sites like Tinder to other users, for the intended shared goal of engaging in a sexually focused hookup.

**Gay Online Hookup Culture**

The need to be admired and talked to on these dating sites and apps is especially relevant to young gay male populations. According to Albright (2008) those seeking same sex partners use these sites more frequently than heterosexual individuals. She finds that gay men and lesbians were the most likely to report meeting others in person from connecting on online sites (Albright, 2008). Gay men from Albright's study were the most likely of her participants to have reported to have met 50 or more people in person from the allocation of online networks (Albright, 2008). With this high level of virtual to in the flesh meeting rates, self-presented

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image and identity online has been reported as being highly valued and focused on among gay male users. For instance, Roach (2015) finds that among those who used gay dating sites and apps, one's profile was seen as a brand, and users were concerned about how to stand out in a pack of other brands (profiles). Thus, it can be presumed gay men are often concerned with the idea that their online presence is easily interchangeable from others. There is often much thought and anxiety on how to make one's presented online identity remarkable in some way.

Despite this need to stand out from other profiles, users must not stand out negatively. Sánchez and Vilain (2012) found that this is especially true if a user appears to be feminine or overweight. Sánchez and Vilain (2012) surveyed 751 gay men in United States regarding the importance of masculinity in gay men. They analyzed gay men's ideal versus perceived masculinity–femininity, how gay men assess masculinity, and to test whether masculine consciousness and anti-effeminacy could predict negative feelings about being gay. They discovered that internalized heterosexism as well as strong portrayals of masculinity in the male gender, were the largest and most common factors in potential hookup and romantic partners (Sánchez & Vilain, 2012). Those who do not adequately uphold these gender values and norms are often faced with online social backlash from others and deeper feelings of insecurity regarding their identity presence online (Sánchez & Vilain, 2012). This backlash can be attributed to being isolated by other users on the apps, as well as being harassed online. The praise of idealized masculinity among gay users intersects with other identities and traits as well. Users on hookup apps commonly write “No fats. No fems. No Asians”. This evidently expresses a user's disinterest in men with these particular attributes, with the latter two groups referring to frequently condemned gay feminine men and perceived effeminate races (Hoang, 2014). Gay individuals who are using dating sites and apps are faced with much more overt racism, classism,

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sexism, effemiphobia, and patriarchal masculin-ism than a straight user would (Roach, 2015). On these online and public sites, tensions exist among gay users between wanting to be viewed as desirable and avoiding unwanted stigma from those perceived to be outside of this idealized group (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2014).

In addition to the large pressure to be perceived as masculine to other gay men, within the online gay dating community there is a theme found of conforming to the informal social guidelines of the used site or app. The online language used among gay hookup app users is often characterized as monosyllabic, grunt-like propositions, which are used to “seal the deal” as efficiently as possible (Roach, 2015). These users are enacting the sexual script of “anonymous sexual encounters.” Within this specific script, users engage in a dialogue of straightforward questions and answers between one another to see if a hookup is an immediate or future possibility (Stempfhuber & Liegl, 2016). Stempfhuber and Liegl (2016) conducted qualitative field research that consisted of ethnographic participant observations and interviews with the users of the wildly popular gay hookup app, Grindr. They focused on both the technical and physical environment Grindr produces for its users, whom are within the surrounding regions of one another. They found that a user’s experience on Grindr is pertinent to the communication method they are using. With interface-to-interface (online to online dialogue) communication having the most immediate critique and surveillance of the users profile (Stempfhuber & Liegl, 2016). This reveals how one is subject to heavy judgement solely from their online profile.

Another important facet of the anonymous sexual encounters sexual script, is the visibility and exchange of photos to other users. Penney (2014), who closely analyzed Grindr’s interface and user habits, found that each user’s public profile is commonly composed of a single

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selfie, which is displayed and compared alongside all other profiles of users in the nearby area. As Grindr only permits one public picture for its users, one singly chosen photo encompasses the user's whole exterior self. Grindr constructs stereotypes through which each individual becomes an object to be critiqued and consumed by others solely based on the image that's been uploaded (Penney, 2014). Grindr's app foundation is based on an exchange of images, both the public profile image, and shared private pictures to other users in its messaging features. Penney (2014) focuses on how users on Grindr and other dating sites are subject to rejection, judgment, and not making the cut. Which is solely based on shared photos, narcissistic tendencies, and shallow language towards others. Penney (2014) finds that the public display photos, which is commonly either a face image, a headless torso, or just a blank profile are the first to be analyzed by others. Users initially garner a sense of the user's lifestyle quality by their apparent physical features in their profile photo. He then finds that shared, frequently nude imagery is then exchanged to others. In which these photos are subject to heavy critiques from the receiver. Within this exchange of photos in the anonymous sexual script theory, users ask themselves: would I go on a date with that? Would I want to have sex with that? (Penney, 2014).

Despite frequent negative stereotyping from larger social institutions against gay individuals, in terms of mental, emotional, and physical needs, research suggests both heterosexual and homosexual individuals have the same relational wants and desires. Scholars have found that in terms of sexual identity and inherent sexual needs, people of all sexual orientations, develop the same way, both biologically and psychologically (Edwards and Brooks, 1999). Men who desire partners of the same sex, just like their heterosexual counterparts, enact practices that resemble the currently upheld sexual script, which for many young adults in

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today's contemporary American society is hooking up. Social stereotypes, however, often depict gay relationships as something that is unhappy and highly dysfunctional in comparison to heterosexual relationships (Peplau, 2007). Frequent negative labels paint gay men as those who would rather sleep with as many other men as possible, rather than being committed to one single person. While in actuality, the majority of gay individuals wish to couple (Frost, 2011). This proves challenging as gay individuals have a shortage in physical locations where they can meet like-minded relationship oriented men.

### **Repurposed Meaning from Hooking Up**

While dating sites and hookup apps are undoubtedly used for their intended purposes, which is to hookup, research also finds that another contradictory communicative phenomenon is occurring. Users are operating in these socially constructed places of outwardly instantaneous and emotionally care-free environments, with the intentions to actually seek more long term and committed relationships. Palik (2010) surveyed a sample of 642 urban, sexually active adults regarding their sexual casual encounters and consequent relationship qualities and found that individuals who might not consider pursuing long term relationships immediately, tend to seek out casual sexual involvements with others. However, this shared intimacy can easily accumulate into a committed relationship, rather than just a mere hookup partner, depending on the partner's motives (Palik, 2010). Palik (2010) also found that those who are actively seeking ongoing casual romantic partners, or friends with benefits, consciously tend to select those who share perceived similar lifestyles, which additionally adds to the forming of a potential committed relationship. Research has also found that both young male and female adults following the dominant sexual script of "hooking up," tend to use their hookups as a guise to their fellow

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hookup partners. That is, in reality they wish to date and evaluate if this casual connection from a satisfying hookup partner could grow into a potential committed relationship (Garcia et al., 2012).

As online dating sites and apps are synonymous with modern day gay meeting and dating, it is evident that these resources provide great potential in the finding a life partner. However, it's important to ask what is truly behind this search for the "special someone" and a relationship? The idea of attaining a relationship is a common goal of many, in which people believe that coupling will reward them with being seen and considered as whole, or completed. Cobb (2007) argues that being single and not in a relationship is actually a form of queer sexual orientation. In that it is the exact opposite of coupledom, which results in being viewed by others as resisting hegemonic normalcy. Singlehood is often viewed as a personal decision, as opposed to a highly-manufactured belief that we will naturally end up with someone and find "the one" (Tung, 2015). Researchers Pignotti and Abell (2009) measured stereotyping of people who are single among both undergraduate and graduate students and found that singles are often faced with being the target of negative stereotyping, stigmatization, and discrimination, as singles are often paid less by employers. Singles often do not realize that their social population is highly stigmatized, and therefore, they internalize this oppression. Students who were single at the time of the study often blamed themselves as being flawed, and in return, frequently suffered from low self-esteem, as they were unable to find a significant other (Pignotti & Abell, 2009). This can often have detrimental effects on assessing and evaluating future healthy and unhealthy relationships. As many single individuals are constantly thinking they are required to find a life partner.



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Hooking up among young gay adults, whether it is mediated through the allocation of online and mobile devices, or through other forms of interaction, brings both drawbacks and benefits. Some young gay adults are genuinely seeking just a one-time hookup or an ongoing no strings attached situation, while others are perhaps inclined to find a more meaningful connection from the act of hooking up. It's important to note that many college students end up feeling regret after consensually hooking up with other students as it often leads to depressive symptoms, post hookup (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). However, in their study Aubrey and Smith (2013) recognize each case of hooking up is specialized to the individual and contextual factors. Many accounts of dating apps and modern romantic practices are highly pessimistic and downplay the positives of networked intimacy, especially among gay individuals. Including hooking up as a potential intermediary that can foster companionship, love, and intimacy (Hobbs et al., 2016). Whichever of these many variables behind the intentions and outcomes of young adults hooking up, research needs to significantly consider younger gay populations regarding using the social act of hooking up itself as a means to pursue long term relationships (Stinson, 2010). As existing research pertaining to heterosexual populations indicate that hookups can be used to find a more lasting connection with someone, it is crucial to see if this practice transcribes over to the gay male adult community.

**Contemporary Relationship Pressures and Obligations**

Once a gay romantic partner has been identified and one member of the relationship wishes to increase the mutual level of commitment in the relationship, they must reveal their intentions to be in a personal relationship to one another. When young adults wish to progress their relationship, Taylor, Rappleyea, Fang, and Cannon (2013) find they engage in the ritual of

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“the talk.” Taylor et al. administered online surveys to participants aged 18-25, pertaining to communication technologies and acceptable dating behaviors. They found “the talk” is where both partners can express their mutual feelings for each other and reveal that they want to establish how the relationship will move forward. Using the three factors of the Investment Model, an individual’s level of commitment in a romantic relationship is based on the amount of satisfaction experienced from the relationship, the quality of the available alternatives to that relationship, and the amount of investment in the relationship (Tan, Agnew, VanderDrift, and Harvey, 2015). Greater commitment to a relationship results from greater satisfaction, fewer alternatives, and more investments in the relationship (Tan et al., 2015). If two romantic partners find that they enjoy their time spent together and can envision a future with one another, a more exclusive relationship type can be developed. It is important to highlight that young gay adults who wish to have a long-term relationship with another man, often resort to the employment of using gay mobile apps to find their romantic partner.

**Research Questions:**

RQ 1: Why do young gay men choose mobile apps to facilitate the possibilities of meeting others?

RQ 2: What relationship maintenance strategies and tools do they employ after the initial hookup?

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**Methods****Participants**

The participants who took part in the study were young male adults aged between 18 and 26. A requirement they needed to meet in order to be eligible for the study was that they used a dating app(s) in the past and met another male as a result of this use. There was a total of twelve participants in this study. Ten of the twelve interviewees sexually identified as gay while the remaining two members identified as bisexual. Respondents were predominantly white in their ethnicity, with three of the twelve participants being nonwhite. The majority of these participants came from a middle to upper class socioeconomic level. All of the participants were college educated, with a mixture of them being currently active college students and the others being graduates. Participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

There were various methods of recruitment for participants the researcher had employed. Flyers, handouts, and emails were distributed to several LGBTQ centers across the Greater Denver Area. However, participants who ended up being involved in the study were found through the process of snowball sampling. This was specifically achieved through the interviewer reaching out to contacts in his immediate network, and recruiting additional participants based on interviewee recommendations. The majority of these participants were also currently using dating apps at the time of the interview. These types of individuals were imperative to the study in order to accumulate a sense of how these young men were using and employing the dating technologies that are available to them. It was crucial to have this specific group of subjects involved in the study as they openly expressed to the researcher how they viewed and understood many of the relationships formed off of these online apps.

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**Procedures**

In-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted with participants. Which were either in person or face-to-face via a video conferencing site (Skype). First, the researcher provided the interviewee with a printed copy of a verbal informed consent form. The participants were required to read the form, which listed the nature of the study and the type of questions that they would be asked. They then verbally confirmed, "yes" that they wanted to continue with the interview, and kept the form for their own records. For interviews conducted via Skype, informed consent forms were sent to the interviewee's email address. They confirmed to the researcher they read over the form and agreed they wanted to be in the study before being interviewed. Prior to the beginning of the interviews, participants were reminded that at any point they could request the audio-taping device to be turned off, refuse to answer a question, or to end the session. Once participants acknowledged this statement, the researcher turned on the audio-taping device and began the interview.

The interviews lasted approximately 15 to 40 minutes and occurred at a time and place that was convenient for the participant. In-person interviews took place in study rooms at the researcher's campus library and coffee shops in the Greater Denver Area. The interviews conducted over Skype were done in the researcher's residence. The location for the interviews were chosen by the participant.

The interview questions employed are included in Appendix A. They included open ended questions that are related to the research being conducted. This includes items pertaining to how participants understood dating, their general reason and use for operating dating apps, how they communicate with others on the apps, what type of encounters they had meeting others from these apps, and their long-term relationship goals. The principal investigator intended to

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form a friendly social bond with the interviewee, with the goal of easing any tension or discomfort the interviewee might have faced while discussing some of the topics. This was achieved through developing a strong sense of rapport. Upon establishing this connection, the researcher began asking more specific and customized questions pertaining to the individual being interviewed.

The following are example sets of questions that were asked throughout the interview. These example questions focused on the participant's current dating practices: 1) How do you define dating? 2) Where would you find other people you wanted to get to know better with the intentions of possibly dating? 3) Have you ever downloaded or used a dating site, if so which ones? 4) What are your goals for using these sites? 5) Do you think other users on these sites/apps have the same goals as yourself?

The following are example questions asked focusing on how they use the apps to communicate and meet up with others: 1) What made you use this particular app? 2) Are there any general differences you have noticed between these apps? 3) Do you still use these apps? 4) Have you ever met up with someone from these apps? 5) If so how did it go, did you have your goals met? The following are example questions that aim to distinguish their long-term dating practices from using the apps: 1) Would you ever consider dating someone from these sites? 2) When you meet people from the apps what do you do next? 3) Would you prefer to meet someone to go grab a coffee/go on a date with, or just to hookup? 4) Do you want to be in a committed relationship with another man? If so, when do you see yourself doing this and do you have the intentions of traditionally "settling down" with someone?

The principal investigator posed these forms of open ended questions and participants answered them in their own words and provided as much detail as they felt comfortable sharing.

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The purpose of this open ended-ness and relaxed structured interview methodology is rooted in the interpretive data the researcher intended to collect. When the interview reached its conclusion, participants were given the opportunity to share or discuss any topic they felt was important about which they had not been asked.

Once the interview had ended, the audio-taped interviews were then transferred from the recording device to the researcher's password protected computer. For the purpose of the analytical work, all of the audio interviews were transcribed in full by the researcher himself.

### **Interview Analysis**

The principal investigator chose to incorporate thematic coding as the main form of data analysis in this study. The researcher chose to utilize thematic coding due to the inductive nature of this study. Prior to collecting the data, there had not been any type of category or theme the researcher wanted to use or employ.

The researcher listened to the recorded interviews and then began the process of writing down word for word each phrase uttered during the interview between himself and the interviewee. Once the full transcription process had been completed, the researcher read through the fully transcribed interviews multiple times. The primary investigator then began internalizing and understanding the data that was collected. From this point the researcher went through the transcripts and began to mark key terms and quotes that initially stood out to him from each participant. The researcher began uncovering the differences and similarities between the participants accounts of their responses to the questions asked. On this same thread, new communicative phenomena were additionally found that the researcher had previously not considered. There was then a development of key ideas and quotes that were evident among the

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interviews. The principal investigator generated detailed notes on each idea/quote and why it was interesting. The researcher also examined how the data was tying in with the theoretical concepts the study was examining. This noting process also assisted in pointing out differentiating processes of interest that was present for each separate participant. In the final step of the coding procedure, the researcher generated a list of potential themes that emerged from the marked ideas and quotes, all of which correlated to the research questions stated.

Upon reviewing the data and using the extensive process of coding, a resulting five themes emerged. The researcher acknowledged the following specific elements from every participant's interview and how it correlated with the data collected. First, there was an evident form of hookup culture being practiced by participants. Second, the mobile apps used functioned as the primary meeting place of the gay men in this study. Third, each participant expressed their self-identity differently from one another through the apps. Fourth, the meeting of others online in offline places (meeting face-to-face) all differentiated greatly from one another in terms of success or disaster. Fifth, each participant had a different account of how they chose to communicate with the men they met from the apps and what their personal long term relational goals were.

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**Findings****Introduction**

The primary claim that prompted this study were that hookup apps, and the many users of them, are disrupting the way relationships are being formed. A negative focus is especially seen in the discussion surrounding young gay men and their use of apps that facilitate the hookup culture. An article in *Time* magazine went so far as to claim that hookup apps were destroying gay youth culture (Feeman, 2014).

Data collected from 18 to 26-year old users of these hookup apps for this current study suggest otherwise. Surprisingly, the twelve participants interviewed for this study still maintained rather traditional views on dating, relationships, and marriage. While hookup apps provide the means for a quick hookup, and are frequently used toward these ends, a more long-term connection with another person is sometimes desired when users engage others using this particular form of social media. From the data gathered it appears that these social search apps are an important tool for gay men as they navigate the dating scene and screen potential mates.

Grindr, among the other dating apps, was by far the most popular and widely used gay app used among these interviewees; every individual reporting using this app. Reasons for using this particular app and potentially others fluctuated, though five distinct themes related to this choice emerged. First, users wanted to be clear that a hookup was the primary reason for using the app and its use reflected a broader set of cultural dating practices. Second, the app replaces physical/material spaces that don't exist in this community. Third, this particular app is an important self-presentation tool. Fourth, users acknowledge that there is a difference between face-to-face connections and connections made on a mobile dating site. And finally, once initial



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contact has been established through the app, parties may choose to communicate in other ways when conveying future plans or future relational goals.

**“When you say hookup it always has some kind of sexual connotation attached to it”**

Participants were aware that downloading these apps and becoming active on them comes with a collective user mindset that there are social expectations of using the app itself. Quite frequently this can be characterized in the blunt undertones of a sexually focused messaging transpiring among the users. This form of overtly sexual exchange contributes to a larger goal, the hookup itself.

Noah, a twenty-two-year-old college student who has extensively studied social theories of sexuality, openly shares how meeting people and hooking up have two dialectic meanings.

Which is especially seen during modern times. Noah states,

the whole thing of like meeting people or like seeing someone now has completely shifted meanings. Now when you say hookup it always has some kind of sexual connotation attached to it. Where like twenty years ago it was not sexual to say hookup with someone, in fact like hooking up with someone was to actually meet someone. It's just weird how that has all changed.

Noah's personal insights mirror previous communication research that argues there has been a socially evolving shift that has occurred. In which more formalized and structured forms of courting have diminished into more casual hookups becoming the norm (Bogle, 2007). Noah picks up on the nuances that are a product of this greater shifting social tide in which many scholars affirm we are living such as Bogle (2007), Stinson (2010), and Garcia et al. (2012).

The hookup is increasingly pervasive in gay culture and interviewees made note of this.

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Blake sees evidence of the acceptance of hookup culture in his day-to-day life and believes that this type of casual sex mindset is gaining traction. Blake proclaims,

I think you see a lot people, like all around us all the time, like on television your constantly seeing commercials for like Match.com, Farmersonly, all of these different types of dating sites, and everybody else like my friends and friends of friends like nonchalantly talk about Tinder and Grindr all of these online dating profiles right on your phone kinds of things and so you get these- I just think it's more accessible and more people are okay with online dating now, as a result of that just because it's always around us and in the media.

Blake conceptualizes hookup culture as more than just sleeping with other people; it's also a way of looking for a more long-term romantic partner. The two online dating sites Blake mentioned (Match.com and Farmersonly) approach connecting with others much differently than sites like Tinder and Grindr, where a sexual encounter is not just merely implied; it's expected. Match and Farmersonly, dating sites that are web page-based, promote finding a someone "special" with whom you can settle down with. Purely mobile based apps like Tinder and Grindr advertise the fun experience of finding someone to spend time with in the moment.

Blake then proceeds to mention that while this concept of finding others to be with is persistent in his everyday life, he argues that it is not necessarily a bad thing. Blake mentions,

I mean we live in an age where you can date on the internet or your phone a lot easier, I feel like it's a lot easier for us now so much more so than like our parents to meet people, because we have the opportunity to go out and meet people and we have all of these resources readily available to us and dating is more engrained into our culture kind of thing than it has been in the past.

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This constant state of accessibility to communicate with others online seemingly changes former dating practices and routines that existed prior to the internet dating revolution. For individuals of all sexual orientations, especially men seeking men, the opportunity of meeting another person whom they may develop a romantic involvement with is more feasible than it ever has been.

Blake continues,

you don't have to go out and put in the effort to find somebody when you can just talk to people on the internet and get a little bit of a base going into a first dating or something versus just going into a first date with somebody you just had met kind of thing. Which I think is helpful.

Hookup culture in contemporary times has undoubtedly changed the way dating itself transpires among individuals. Blake conceptualizes this by his way of describing how you can get to know someone in perhaps a better sense than you would just striking up a conversation with a stranger in public, whom may or may not be pursuing a romantic involvement of their own with an individual. He reasons that if another person has a profile on a dating app, them being open to a relations encounter is a forgone conclusion. One does not have to strike up a conversation to find out if this person is looking for a connection with someone.

The internet and its role in present day hookup culture have evidently changed the definition of what dating is or was. This tension between old and new dating can be seen in Stefano's response when asked to define dating.

I define dating as – well, I'm kind of weird with it. I have in my mind old school dating and new school dating. Whereas old school dating is when you actually court someone and get them. And then to kind of fall for each other and just actively pursue each other

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at the same time, whereas new school dating is kind of more like 'oh hey, you like me, I like you, let's bang I guess we are dating now.'

Stefano was then asked which one he ends up pursuing more of,

Umm I guess I want to say the romantic in me goes for the courting or dating thing whenever I have a crush on someone, but realistically speaking in today's day in age it's more like the other type of situation I mentioned where it's 'hey you like me I like you' type of thing. Where we both have time and we are both at this place so let's both hangout.

Stefano personifies the struggle many other men interviewed are facing; they want the opportunity to traditionally date someone, but are not really going through with it for multiple reasons. This easier way of dating, the kind that does not involve traditional courtship, is more attainable for the users. He also comments on how easy it is to set up a meeting between users. One can just go online and find someone who might have some available time for a hookup and/or date.

Marc, another study participant, also attempted to define dating. For him, dating is an active process. Marc answers,

Dating is when you are continuously seeing someone on a pretty consistent and regular basis. I don't think it's like the first or second time you hang out with someone but rather more like you are seeing this person because you both want to get to know each other more romantically and are kind of in that headspace where you might take things further in terms of your involvement. So, I guess it's an active kind of practice, not 'oh we went on a few dates and things ended up not working out', more like 'yeah, I'm dating him or her, and we are seeing each other consistently'.

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There was a similar response from Howard, who views dating as something when both individuals are pursuing one another. Howards states,

I identify as bisexual and in high school I had several girlfriends and I have never dated a guy before, so I never really had that experience with it, but with girls it's still kind of the same, where in college your like okay you regularly see each other you regularly keep in contact with them, you go hangout with them, study with them. Nothing really too umm out of the ordinary I guess.

Marc and Howard both personify what many of the other men who were interviewed claim: dating is an ongoing practice. While not everyone in this age demographic uniformly has the same beliefs about what dating is and isn't, it's interesting to see how their own concepts of dating and hookup culture itself reflect their personal reasons for using the app at this stage in life.

**“I don't feel that there is a place where I can meet people”**

In terms of reasons for using the app themselves on a more regular basis, this is where the most differentiation between the interviewees occurs. Samuel reveals his main reason for using gay apps is simply because he does not feel there's any other option. He shares,

Being gay in Boulder is kind of difficult to go out and meet somebody I feel like you won't be able to and you're almost forced to use the internet or apps and things of that nature because there's no real way to identify people or like say 'hey I'm interested in you' or say 'hey want to go on a date?'

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Samuel continues, "I don't feel that there is a defining place where I can meet and know people who they really are themselves, the only way I feel I can is through using the apps."

This provides some insight as to why there has been a rise in a gay apps. The city of Boulder, Colorado (where the majority of participants reside) does not have a gay bar or club like other cities across the country do. This absence of a specifically gay locale "forces" individuals to use gay apps. The app becomes the social space in which they are afforded the opportunity to talk to other people who are interested in men. Howard reiterates this sense of being essentially forced to use online platforms to meet others. He says,

For dating I probably would prefer to meet the person actually in person more over like an online setting, I guess, I don't know. So, a lot of people that I've met and dated are people that I've stayed in touch with from like parties or mutual friend groups, so I kind of prefer more of that aspect because it seems more personal and intimate when you are actually interacting with the person. On the same token though I'm bisexual so meeting men like that is more few and far between.

He points out this lack of intimacy present on online venues. When attempting to make connections with other individuals, whether it be friends or possible dates, he has issues with meeting like-minded men. This, and the fact that he is not fully out about his sexual orientation to everyone in his life, is why he chooses to use online apps to meet other men.

Noah shares how this crucial absence of gay establishments specifically in Boulder, Colorado, his current place of residence, has also in a sense forced him to use apps, despite meeting his current fiancé at a gay bar in a different city. Noah states,

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Here in Boulder it's kind of hard. I feel like, but essentially, I mean going out to like gay bars umm I wouldn't say it's your ideal place to meet someone but umm for Boulder and even for Denver, there's not really like any places where gay people meet up like there used to be in the past. Like I feel like there used to be coffee shops and like gay book clubs and like all these things that gay people would do with each other and learn from each other and now it's like the only options you have is to either go to a bar or you use an app to meet up with someone.

Noah is also pointing out how the lack of gay-oriented locations in the surrounding community makes it so individuals have to resort to utilizing avenues that are not the most ideal to really getting to know someone. Despite Noah revealing that gay bars and apps aren't his favorite forms of communication, he enjoys the stability and control that mobile apps like Grindr have in his life. He states,

Grindr was always a reference point I could come back to and if I wanted to meet anyone regardless of what my intentions were, I could use that app. In the way that I wanted to. Like I held the reigns on how things would happen. Like if I were to meet up with someone I would be clear with my intentions. Like I'd say this what I'm feeling or this is what I'm not feeling like. I like that I could use it as my reference point to see other people that were like me around me.

Participants in this study enjoyed the level of control over interpersonal interactions an app like Grindr gives them. They are able to set the conditions on who they talk to and what is on or off limits. In fact, some participants prefer talking to others on an app versus meeting in person because they can be more selective about who they interact and what they discuss. Some men willingly choose apps over the bar scene. Marc illustrates the importance of these boundaries,

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I have been to both gay bars and clubs, and I still use my phone apps. I'm off the internet sites now, just because I feel there is more of an instant presence of the types of people I'd like to meet on the mobile apps, rather than dating sites. but yeah thinking about it now, I definitely prefer using mobile apps than to meeting people at like gay bars, I don't know maybe that's my preference but if I'm seriously looking to date someone, I would like to get to know them better, which I feel is more feasible through the use of apps, as opposed to meeting at a bar type of environment.

Marc sees the app as his way of better connecting with people and having more control or visibility over the process of connecting. Both Marc and Noah share some of the similar grounds for why they continue to use their gay apps, in that they are able to select what they are comfortable and not comfortable doing with other people. This type of conscious filtering transcends into how participants later control how they may or may not meet others in person.

Despite this satisfaction that accompanies having more control over the encounter, there is no denying Grindr and many of the other gay apps are still sexually hookup based – and not everyone is looking for a just casual hookup.

Jordan describes this juxtaposition of wanting to be in a relationship but also wanting to hookup. Jordan states,

I mean when I definitely downloaded Tinder and Grindr at around the same time, I knew that I wasn't really looking for people to relate to or anything on a platonic level. If anything I was maybe looking to see if me and the other guys on there would be able to start dating and be in a relationship because I myself am more long term relationship oriented and monogamous, that's just how I am automatically.. but I mean of course



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I've used them for hookups casually too. Not very frequently though it just sometimes ends up that way.

While nearly every participant disclosed that they have a long-term goal of finding someone to settle down with, in the interim it seems to be an “anything goes”, type of role these apps play. Stefano sheds some light on why he is currently using Grindr. After being asked if he uses any of the apps differently from one another, he professes, “I pretty much use each of them with the same type of goals. Which is to gain satisfaction of some kind. The sexual kind of satisfaction.” This is an internal conflict that Stefano shares in addition to some of the others who were interviewed. Which is this gap of time between meeting your significant other and still wanting to have some form of romantic satisfaction until that transpires. During this varying in length transition period before meeting “the one,” app users will continue the process of reaching out to other users online for the possibility of meeting face to face. From that point onward they can determine what type of relationship they might have with one another based on the perceived level of satisfaction both relational members are experiencing. This online language used during the setting up of face to face, in person appointments, leads the next theme of the study. Which is the types of messaging content found on the gay mobile apps.

**“I changed my photo to a shirtless pic; now everyone is interested”**

Participants were eager to share some of the forms of messaging they engage in with others on these mobile search apps. Especially how the content and structure of these messages they partake in, are a reflection of their own self-identity. Samuel provides the following testament as to how some of the apps are piercingly shallow, and that the only way a conversation with others can be commenced is through looking good in photos. Samuel states,

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There is definitely a pressure to present yourself in a certain way in the apps and in the gay community in general. I've changed my profile photo and I receive messages from people I know that I've spoken to or at least tried to speak to and they have said nothing to me, and once I changed my photo to a shirtless pic, now everyone is interested.

Samuel recognizes that this evident sense of masculine sex appeal is important on the apps. However, he does not necessarily disagree with this notion of physical appearances being a determining factor in communicating with others. He continues,

I mean I think it's shallow but I get it, I mean there is that constant pressure to perform and be just this muscled and attractive thing. I don't think it's good thing. I think it's toxic honestly, but it's just part of the protocol.

Despite recognizing that one of the only reasons he receives messages from others on the sites is because he changed his display photo to a shirtless pic; Samuel still continues to have this as his primary photo. As Samuel conveys it's not the most ideal way to have conversations with others, but to him it's the only way he can. When Samuel uses the term "perform" there is a strong implication he is referring to performing or appearing as masculine as possible, which is reflected in the torso picture that captures how fit he is.

The exchange of photos of oneself both solicited and unsolicited, via the messaging services on the apps, was a crucial proponent on whether or not a conversation blossoms on these mobile platforms. Howard, whom is sensitive about his identity and visibility on the mobile apps, specifically Grindr, chooses to have a vague image of himself on the app's grid of nearby men. He explains why he does this,

I don't know I really take advantage of the anonymous aspect to it. Not in a bad way or anything but like you can put your name or you don't have to put your name on

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your profile. You can upload your picture or you don't have to. It leaves it up to that person's own discretion. So they can make the choices themselves and they don't have to be like ohh, hey this is me, and what I'm all about right away.

Howard mentions that he takes advantage of the anonymity of Grindr. Howard was the only participant who was openly concerned about his privacy on the apps. He fears that he will be outed to perhaps his friends, family, and even potential female love interests by someone spotting him on the app. Most of the men interviewed in this study chose to have public photos of themselves. This is due to their apparent comfort in having their presence exposed on the app. Howard explains,

within the gay world like I feel like we are kind of in this transitional era where not everyone is not so sure what they want to define themselves as. So I think that a lot of people start off with that kind of curiosity. Oh who else is like me, can I be friends with them, can I have a relationship with them? So I think that's kind of where it mostly starts from. But if people ask for a face picture I'll send it to them, because it just feels odd like I'm not being true to myself if the guy I'm talking to hasn't seen a photo of me. So I don't really see the need to change how I act on Grindr. I don't talk differently on it.

Aside from having a nonrevealing display photo of himself on Grindr, he is not afraid to share his face pictures with those that he is interested in engaging in conversation. The trading of photos is seen as an important self-presentation and identity construction tool in the messaging platform of mobile apps.

The receiving of unexpected sexually explicit photos, however, can be a highly unpleasant experience. Noah shares his discontent regarding this bombardment of male nude

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photos he routinely experiences when using dating apps. Specifically, when individuals initiate a message just by sending photos without any written greeting.

that's the thing that would piss me off the most. I would get angry with these people if they sent me a pic of themselves first and I'd reply with 'wow great way to start a conversation' or I'd say stupid things like that or I'd be like just like calling them out on it. Like you know uhh 'hello would have been nice too instead of just like a pic of your dick'.

While not every user on these apps begins messages with others in this manner, it is important to note that nearly every participant in the study mentioned how common they experienced this form of online sexual harassment. With participants like Noah who dislike this aspect of the apps, there was an evident tone of accepting that is just part of the online dating world. Noah continues to articulate his beliefs on how swapping photos and self-presented identity through messaging are interrelated with one another. He adds,

being online kind of allowed me to like yeah, change the way that you do project yourself now that I'm thinking about it. It's just you have this barrier in between you, even though you can hide behind these texts and be who you want to be or say what you want to say. When I talk to people I mean I was and am pretty authentic when I told people what I was looking for in my conversations, and even then the conversations don't go very far before something sexual comes up.

Noah recognizes the potential for there to be a disconnect between one's true self and the way they interact with others online. Regardless of this contradiction, Noah does not feel the need to be someone or something that he's not. He reiterates that he is blunt in what he is looking for with others on these sites when he is using them. He also points out that there is eventually an

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expectation or general understanding that it is only a matter of time before what began as a casual conversation with another man quickly becomes sexually in nature. Like Noah, who remains authentic to his identity and reasoning for using the app, Blake projects his unadulterated self in his online presence. Blake proclaims,

I'm not really in the gay scene. I hardly go to gay bars. It's just because I'm not into the club scene period, I barely go to normal bars. It's just not my thing. I'd rather stay at home and play video games, or go out and go hiking or something like that rather than sit in a nightclub all night. And I don't project anything. I project me. Because if somebody is going to like me they are not going to like me for this false pompous image I'm putting on. I mean somebody might want me to put on this false image, but it's like, why because that's not me? I'm not going to sit here and pretend to be somebody that you want just because you want me to be somebody I'm not.

When asked if he projects himself in a different way than how he truly sees himself online or in person, Blake offers a narrative that is atypical of most of the young adults who were interviewed. Aside from the usage of the gay mobile apps, he does not adhere to the traditionally gay oriented ways of meeting other gay/bisexual men. This is primarily because he is not a fan of going to gay bars, while other participants frequented them with hopes of meeting other men. Blake uses these gay apps to communicate his true identity to others. Blake specifically states that he is looking for a video game or hiking buddy, rather than a piece of arm candy in a gay bar. In doing so, he hopes to meet others who will appreciate and reciprocate their sincere selves to him online.

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While a majority of the men shared that they do their best to remain as authentic to themselves as possible, Jordan conveys a contrasting side of this messaging and self-presentation. He says,

I think I am definitely a different person online than I am in person. I am much more forward in my conversations online, and additionally in like messaging I have time to think my thoughts through instead of sounding like an idiot or whatever in person. I'm definitely more confident and strategic over messaging or texting, and I guess I use that to my advantage.

Jordan shares a relatable account that many other users of mobile technologies face, in that they have the option to reply to a message when it is best convenient for them. This is until they have crafted a self-deemed appropriate response to the message. Jordan's input on how he views messaging and how it allows him to alter himself in some regards is an honest insight into how some men communicate with others on these platforms. Jordan critiques himself as talking like an idiot in person at times, and therefore opts to modify this perceived personality flaw over messaging avenues.

Stefano introduces a method of how he communicates online and how it is directly tied to his current state of mind. When asked about his own self-presentation and the goals of others on the mobile apps he mentions,

Oh I'm pretty sure everyone has the same mindset on the apps, like everyone in our fast-paced society is kind of looking for that quick fix because they are probably busy with work, school, or whatever so I mean ideally they want the same thing in terms of a long-term connection, but they opt to do something quick. Meet up, get the job done, move on with your day. The language online is reflective of that.

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Stefano's response alludes to the sexual script theory of anonymous sexual encounters where the least amount of words are exchanged among users in order to "seal the deal" of a hookup as fast as possible (Roach, 2015). Stefano also aligns himself within the fast-paced, goal-oriented mindset that is practiced on these sites. This is where individuals are simply on the apps for the here and now, in terms of seeing who is available for an immediate meetup in the area around them. When considering how to present himself online he describes his emotion-focused method of communicating. He mentions,

Umm pretty much I guess showing what or who you truly are is what I go with the most. But like you know if I'm in a certain mood I'll send a certain picture, because that is what I'm looking for in that particular moment. If not and I'm just chatting with a potential friend or someone I'd want to seriously date or whatever then I will send like more face pictures I guess. I will tend to keep it more PG for those instances.

Stefano centers his current state of his emotions as to how he presents himself online. He finds that the mood he conveys to others is what he receives in return. If he is looking for a hookup and expresses that, he expects a hookup and not a coffee date. Stefano and the other respondents in this study are cognizant of the strategies these online platforms provide them. In the differences in messaging online versus actually meeting and talking with someone face-to-face. This form of control in self-presentation ties into the next theme uncovered from the data, and that is meeting others face to face from these online platforms.

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**“I feel like I control how the situation of meeting someone for this first time pans out”**

As previously mentioned, participants shared that they liked having power in how they will meet another person from the app. Howard admits that whether he is meeting someone for the first time with the intent of a hookup or just to hang out with any expectations of sex, he needs to make sure he is comfortable with the individual before participating in a sexual encounter. When asked about how he decides whether or not to sleep with a potential long-term romantic interest he has just met, he explains,

If you have a connection with someone and the vibes are mutual between the both of you, you can sleep with them and I don't see anything wrong with that.. Ultimately I feel like I control how the situation of meeting someone for the first time pans out, which wow I just realized that now as I am speaking with you. But no I don't think sleeping with someone ruins the relationship or the potential for a relationship.

Eleven of the twelve men who participated in the study agreed that they saw no issue in sleeping with someone sooner rather than later who they developed a more serious interpersonal connection with. Howard is one of the individuals who doesn't mind sleeping with someone he might form a long-term relationship with. As Howard points out, this concept of power in the first encounter of meeting someone is rooted by having the variables of the meeting planned out beforehand.

Stefano addresses that meeting others online in offline spaces comes with negative attributes as well, as the following exchange between the researcher and Stefano reads,

PI: Were there any like bad times you could recall or just didn't go as planned when you just met someone for the first time?



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S: Yeah there were some of them were it was just like wow, what just happened, did I really just do that? Which immediately come into my mind.

PI: Do you care to share?

S: What specific instance? I mean I've had my fair share of just having an awkward or I would even say bad experiences from meeting someone. Just feeling uncomfortable.

PI: Like what you just mentioned, I guess how you maneuvered those situations.

S: Well when like you make plans to hang out with somebody and they are not exactly who they say they were or like they don't completely tell you I'm specifically into this, and totally surprise you and you're like wow no I'm not really into that. So those situations I guess. Where you need to either be polite and come up with an excuse like "Oh I'm sorry I forgot I needed to be somewhere right now, or I'm not feeling well. Sorry man. Or you could straight up leave, which is what I did when I met someone who basically cat fished me, and I felt really cheated. But at the same time I hadn't really been talking to this person very long and I knew that was a risk in talking to someone behind a screen. I actually met him at a mall and then I was like 'dude come on', and I just walked away.

As Stefano shares one of his instances of meeting someone face to face who turned out to be someone other than whom they claimed to be, there is a sense of imminent dangers than can be attached to in-person meeting individuals from these apps. When he mentioned he was "basically cat fished" he is referring back to the initial online messaging encounters that took place between Stefano and the other person. There was probably an exchange or receiving of photos between the two parties, where Stefano received photos that were not an accurate portrayal of this

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particular individual. Stefano also shared some exit strategies for how he tries to get out of situations like the one he mentioned. He seems to employ two different ways of disengaging in a meetup. He can either be polite in coming up with a fib of sorts and claim they need to get going for a personal reason, or he can plainly just exit the situation and walk away. Clearly this is based on the situational factors of the meetup itself. For instance, if Stefano met someone who appeared to look drastically different in person than over photos, and he felt he was being lied to, he would likely abruptly exit the face to face encounter. Fortunately, Stefano met this person in a public setting and was not in an environment where he might not have had the possibility of breaking away as easily.

With the unsuccessful occurrences of meeting someone online to in the flesh, there are often accounts of these meetings turning out to be a victory for both individuals. Marc shares why he actually prefers using mobile apps to meet others rather than just striking a conversation with a stranger. Marc provides the following response to the researcher,

I definitely prefer using mobile apps than to meeting people at like gay bars, I don't know maybe that's my preference but if I'm seriously looking to date someone, I would like to get to know them better, which I feel is more feasible through the use of apps, as opposed to meeting at a bar when I might have had a few drinks or where it might be too loud. I actually have never dated anyone I met in person at a bar.

Marc provides an interesting insight as to why he individually employs online mobile search apps to screen men rather than meeting at a gay bar. Marc points out that a gay bar is not the best spot for him to seriously considering someone to meet with the intentions of dating, because of the environmental characteristics itself. The following dialogue between the researcher and Marc, further explains Marc's reasoning for preferring online apps,

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PI: So you would say you get a better feel for the person through an app versus just talking in person?

M: I mean yes and no. I definitely think you need to meet in person to really see if this person is compatible with you and they are who they claim to be.. but yes when you are online you can talk to people on a more regular basis and see who genuinely is making the effort to connect with me and who would rather just you know send a few pictures of themselves, and be like boom here's me, want to meet? And then kind of be on their merry way and move on to the next one, which is certainly sometimes the case. I'm not really looking for that, at this point in my life. But as I mentioned I meet like 100% of the guys I'm interested in through apps whether it is a short term or more serious thing. That's actually where I met my boyfriend of three and a half years, and we were mutually exclusive with one another. So yeah I would say I'm a fan of apps for meeting other guys versus just talking to someone at a bar.

Marc whom is a 23-year-old recent college graduate, highlights a development that is rising among men in his age group. They prefer to use the gay apps themselves to find other men than going to an actual physical location where men who are seeking men are present. Not only because there is an absence of physical gay spaces in Marc's geographic region, but because of the more power he has in deciding who he wants to chat with on the apps. Clearly Marc, who hopes to find a more stable partner from these sites, has had luck in finding a committed boyfriend. Marc introduces the next theme in this analysis chapter of how future plans with a potential romantic interest is expressed.

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**“I make my feelings known and see how it goes from there, I don't like playing games”**

There were a lot of variants in how the participants met someone in person and then establishing their future relational intents with the newly met individual. While some of the men were just going to the meetup without any expectations of a more long term interest, others met specific men for the purposes for having a less casual fling. Jordan gives an account of how him and his boyfriend met on Grindr, for just a hookup, but instead something else developed. He states,

Well we met up for a hookup: he messaged me on Grindr and he was like come over have a drink and watch some Netflix with me? Right away I was like okay, I kind of figured what we were going to get into. And then when I got there, we kind of did our thing. We then swapped cell phone numbers after meeting, which is something I like to do just to make sure the person is who they say they are.. but uhh I really didn't have any expectations from that point. We definitely had a connection though and we would gradually start texting each other more often throughout the day and coming days, and then it was like almost every other day or when I wasn't busy with school or him with his work we would hangout, mainly on the weekends though, it just kind of erupted like that. We both deleted our dating profiles as well recently. Like aside from that we haven't titled our relationship as exclusive yet. I am ready for that, but I just don't think he wants to rush.

Jordan's narrative of how he and his current partner met and the current state of their relationship mirrors other ways the participants met their significant others. Their meetings began with a hookup. There are mixed reports from scholars on whether or not that is a good or bad thing for the course of the relationship (Hobbs et al., 2016). As a hookup can be a one-time thing or

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develop into a friend with benefits type of situation. From that physically beneficial friendship there is a possibility where the two members could become committed partners. Regardless of what these social scientist scholars believe, it is evident that participants like Jordan still want to meet people with the expectation of a hookup as a minimum requirement from the encounters of meeting. Jordan is now in a liminal period of his relationship where they have not established themselves as boyfriends just quite yet, but evidently have notions of doing so, as they both deleted their dating profiles.

Kevin also exemplifies how a one-time hookup can remain that way or grow into something else. He claims,

if you felt good energy from them and the meeting itself, then I would go ahead and message them at some point in the near future, to try and maybe express my interest in them, even if it is just a sexual interest, but yeah I would message him or he would message me, and I guess just keep each other aware that like hey I like you and you like me. Sometimes though you just do your thing and don't really talk again, and I'm honestly alright with that. I notice though if I liked my time with someone, I don't play games and I flat out say, I had fun lets hangout again sometime. Whether or not we do is really up to both of our situations and our time, especially in this type of dating climate. But when you are in the process of dating someone, I feel there is an obligation to continue talking to them or just flat out say hey I'm sorry I'm not feeling this, but in a more caring set of words. Like I have been ghosted before, just flat out ignored and not spoken to, and that hurts more.

As with any relationship possibility Kevin sheds some light on how a mutual connection or appreciation for the other individual is a necessity for a relationship to continue. He also

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shares how it is important to make your feelings towards the romantic interest immediately known. It is interesting when he says that his immediacy in revealing how he feels for the person is connected to the phrase of “this type of dating climate.” This is presumably referring to how fast paced and often times fleeting, connections can be made with individuals that these participants are meeting with. Kevin also mentions how it is upsetting when someone he is seeing just “ghosts” or stops talking to him, which in these specific dating instances usually takes place over online communicative technologies. This can be seen by the ignoring of: texts, phone calls, or other forms of social media messaging.

Technologies, especially texting, play a significant role in each of the participant's narratives of how an attachment with another individual will unfold. Blake shares that he centers his entire relationship possibilities on the texting mannerisms his prospective love interest relays towards him. Blake states,

I usually can gather how the person feels about me from what I'm getting from them via texts after we have hung out a few times. Like if I'm getting weird forced answers from them when I'm just trying to chat with them. Then like okay maybe this isn't going to be – like if I need to push them, like they might not be comfortable like maybe I need to push the conversation to focusing on them or their interests, something like that but I've noticed with other people, like if we have genuine conversation and they care enough to text you every day and ask about your day, then like okay yeah this is going to be something different. When we meet up again and we find that have a bond of some sort, like we have shared interests, that type of thing. It's more about getting to know a person kind of thing that helps out a lot in determining the type of relationship that will develop.

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Blake revealed to the researcher that he is not actively seeking meaningless one time sexual hookups. This is also seen in how he assesses future plans with those he has already met up with. He relies on his understanding the texting and conversational tone of his new technology partner when gauging the likelihood of relationship development.

In this instance and in the many instances of other participants interviewed, when two men have met from these mobile apps, there is a possibility that the communication might now transition into a realm of more personal technologies. It's no longer in the initial stages of replying to the person whenever you log onto the mobile app on your available time. Communication transitions into a more time pressing and direct form via personal text messages. Blake does recognize there are flaws in his strategies of assessing someone's level of interest over texting and he mentions the downfall of his first long term relationship he had with another man whom he met online. He reveals,

After our second date it was kind of like hey we are both really into the same thing, and I could start to see in the way he would talk to me and the way we would text while I was at work, he would text me in the am, before I went to work, the stuff you would expect your boyfriend to do. He started doing that kind of stuff and not wanting to stop texting and like I could see that he genuinely wanted something more and I was too, after our second date I was like yeah I'm a lot more comfortable with this and so the day after our second date I kind of pushed at it, I was like your somebody really special I never met a guy like you type of thing...so I flat out asked him do you want to make this official? And like okay all the sudden we are in a relationship. And that was great and everything, but as I look back on it we probably could have dated a little bit longer, like gone on a couple more of dates, before we

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made that call. Because we probably would have found the little things that started to bug us more towards the end of our relationship and you won't figure that out right away, like especially over texts sent during the times we weren't seeing each other.

Blake expressed to the researcher that he was in a relationship that ultimately ended up not working out. It's important to acknowledge the role technology played over the course of their partnership. When they were not physically around one another, they were evidently communicating via text message. Blake perceived this as a form of romantic gesture and saw it as what a boyfriend should be doing. This is perhaps what Blake now acknowledges as being a weak link in their connection. The constant and easily accessible communicative aspect they shared between one another through mobile technologies was not an accurate portrayal of how they got a long in person. Like all forms of relationships, it is important to have face-to-face time with one another to see if something long term can properly function. Charlie emphasizes how he likes to follow a step-by-step procedure of dating another guy for whom he has feelings. He states,

When I meet someone I like, I will usually make my feelings known to the guy and see how it goes from there, I don't like playing games with people. If he feels the same way, I feel then you are able to start dating on a more regular basis, then exclusively see each other, then once you have done that for a bit, progress into a real relationship.

Charlie also revealed to the researcher that he has had one long term relationship in his lifetime (which ended recently) and that he met his ex-boyfriend through Grindr. He follows a series of events before finally reaching that level of commitment to another man. He states,



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Yeah absolutely.. I want to move in with someone and get married. I want that for my life. I want that commitment with another man. Whenever that come's I think I'm ready for it. It just needs to obviously be with the right person. This is clearly a lifetime commitment that me and him would be making. So it needs to be at the convenience of both of our lives. I'm not ready to rush into anything, I still consider myself to be young and have time to find someone. So, why do that? You know?

Charlie expresses how many other men feel about an overall lifelong goal of finding a partner. His tone also reveals a desire to find a husband or lifelong partner, all the while remaining fairly apathetic towards the whole marriage process. He explains that he's still young and has time to figure out his later in life trajectory. This relaxed time frame to find a long-term mate attitude was a trend in how future relationship goals pan out with the men they are meeting online. Despite the popular view that condemns the hookup culture for pushing back the age of marriage, it is important to point out that gay millennial men in particular are part of a population that have different circumstances affecting their timeline of settling down. Especially since gay marriage across the country of the United States, recently became legal. In a way these men are a new generation of young adults who are incorporating and adapting marriage into their lives, because gay marriage is now legal nationwide. Therefore, the ways their heterosexual and similar in age peers are enacting marriage customs, will be different from how they are enacting this. Charlie is displaying that he has the full intention of finding someone to settle down with, most likely from these apps. However, like some of the other concerns other participants expressed, he needs to weave through the extensive grids of men to find the right one.

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**Discussion and Conclusions****Theoretical Connections to RQ 1**

Scholars and others in modern-day society have formulated and perpetuated a universal notion that both online and mobile dating sites are not ideal places to meet long-term mates. This can be attributed to varying widespread social beliefs and prior research conducted on internet dating. Albright's (2008) study concluded people of all sexual orientations employ the internet to find onboard sexual partners and when meeting these partners feel an increased pressure to behave in a more sexualized way than they normally might. However, as online dating and, more recently, the usage of mobile apps for dating have become more accepted by a large number of young adults, studies on the communication practices seen in these platforms have ensued. These new types of studies, especially those that have chosen to study individual's engagement with dating apps, contribute to an exploration of rather uncharted terrains in this trend of mobile dating. This causes a dilution to the prior negatively pervasive undertones for individuals wishing to use the internet for romantic pursuits. These stigmas towards online dating sites and apps are diminishing as it is becoming more mainstream. Yet, there is still a large failure to recognize homosexual populations in these dating practices.

As seen from recent research pertaining to the male seeking male online community and from the accounts of participants in this study, the logic and practices of young gay and bisexual males using mobile apps sharply differs with their heterosexual counterparts. This is primarily formed on the basis of these men's smaller scale visibility within mainstream and heterosexually hegemonic society. Importantly an absence of physical places where men seeking men can meet adds to this difference between male seeking male and heterosexual communities. This can also

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be attributed in the five key themes developed from the interviews in the current study. These key themes collectively reveal a larger social force that is affecting this segmented population of homosexual men. This can be characterized as the general boundedness and addictive-like habits participants have expressed in their relationship with the apps. This mental inclination to use the apps developed over a short amount of time once respondents began downloading and using them. Primarily interviewees shared how being someone who desires a partner of the same sex, the internet fosters this possibility for them. As gay and bisexual individuals and their dating practices are less accounted for in regards to heterosexual relationships, the internet is considered a safe, and sometimes the only alternative they have for meeting people. This can be in opposition towards a gay or bi male striking up a conversation with a stranger in public who may or may not be gay or bisexual themselves. This contributes to my first research question in why young gay men choose mobile apps to facilitate meeting others.

Environmental factors in the user's immediate geographic location largely contribute to this reliance on gay mobile apps. Respondents conveyed how their mobile app platform experiences are centered around judging and analyzing other men on these sites. As profiles are normally arranged by distance in proximity to the user. Participants revealed how this constant state of real time and simultaneously interchanging profiles in the area brings excitement to their app experience. This excitement can be exemplified as observing and routinely checking out what type of men are considered as "available" around the user. Stefano and Samuel bring forth a finding Blackwell et al. (2014) uncovered from their study regarding the constant state of public visibility these app users' experience. Stefano personally wants to be perceived as attractive and interact with other app users in his area, but also does not want to be perceived negatively by not upholding the correct form of idealized sex appeal on the app. Therefore, users

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both make their display photo the “hottest” picture of themselves. In Samuel’s case it was his shirtless mirror selfie, which he stated had garnered him more messages than when he used a simple and less revealing selfie. From their photo selection, these men are presenting their brand to other users. Roach (2015) theorized that one’s whole identity on these apps are largely interpreted by the user’s photo selection.

This continuous state of engagement with the apps brings forth a compounding set of negative side effects. Participants like Noah and Howard share that they can never fully purge the apps from their lives. Curiosity and the chance to meet someone worthwhile compel them to continuously examine what’s going on with the men in their area. Both respondents shared that when they delete the app(s) from their phone out of various frustrations the apps bring them, they still end up feeling as if they are missing the possible fulfillments the apps might bring them. These fulfillments can be understood as having a designated location of connecting and interacting with other like-minded men. Stempfhuber and Liegl’s (2016) findings tie into this fulfillment found through the use of gay apps like Grindr. These “hookup” sites are actually places that can yield relationships beyond a one-time sexual connection.

Blake’s romantic narrative of how he met his first long term boyfriend from Grindr proves it is possible to find a committed relationship through these sites. Yet, Blake’s account of his relationship with the multiple dating apps he has used reveals his strong commitment to them. Once his romantic relationship ended with his boyfriend he shared that it was not long before he reinstalled the apps he was previously using. While Blake revealed that he gained personal insight about himself and what type of person he is seeking in his next relationship, he still does not feel the need to find other methods of meeting and potentially dating other men. Regardless of the outcomes experienced by these app users, they are never able to fully dismiss them. This

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establishes the addiction like tendencies that can easily be formed from using them as interviewees have reported.

**Theoretical Connections to RQ 2**

Scholars argue that those who are in the age category of emerging adulthood (18-28) are delaying their pursuits of long-term romance (Arnold, 2010), and the findings from this study support these claims. Participants did not feel the need or rush to be intently dating serious potential long term relationship candidates, with the reason primarily being centered on their concept of timeliness. While interviewees wanted to get married or settle down at some point in their lives to the right person, it was not at the forefront of their day-to-day mindset. This in general aligns with a trend in both single heterosexual and homosexual millennial populations. Arnold (2010) confirms this stance participants voiced, as she notes that the age of marriage in the United States is collectively being pushed back. Scholars pinpoint the root of this trend not only lies in a more permissive and frequent rate of young adult hookups, but more socially evolving sexual scripts (Garcia et al., 2012). This acknowledgment sheds light into how the interviewees in this study practice sexual activities with casual and emotionally uncommitted partners. However, as respondents met these other men in person, regardless of the communicated pretenses online, they were simultaneously conducting another round of assessments. Respondents were able to gauge whether or not they could see themselves spending more time with one another after the first meetup. Leading to the potential of a more developed interpersonal association. This information connects to my second research question in understanding what relationship maintenance strategies and tools these men employ after the initial hookup.

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The young men from this study and the other men they had had met from the apps from a hookup, still reverted to rather traditional forms of romantic engagement with one another. This was only relevant if they desired a more long-term connection with the other and wanted to move forward from being friends (with benefits). With long-term being understood as continuing to see one another in more emotionally fulfilling contexts outside of sexual framings. Participants shared they swiftly set up a future date or activity with the other male upon their first meeting. This reaffirms the concept of the perceived value of time and its significance to relationship development. Instead of following antiquated dating rules, such as waiting three days before contacting the admired other, the men were immediate in their pursuit. It can be presumed that respondents did this out of not wanting to wait and see if the other guy was compatible with them personality wise. Additionally, this could be done out of fear that the other guy would meet up and emotionally connect with someone else.

Respondents also conveyed that online communication between one another shifts from the gay mobile app where they first met off of, to more direct and personal forms of social media. This allows easier communicative access to the desired individual. From that point forward if both men continue to like one another, they engage in “the talk.” Taylor et al., (2013) share that “the talk” is where both partners can express their mutual feelings for each other and reveal that they want to establish how the relationship will move forward. If the two men desired a more long-term interpersonal connection, they still engaged in “the talk.” As in any type of relationship with two people of any sexual orientation, couples have some type of confirming conversation that serves as a bridge to the relationship for their future.

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**Limitations**

There are several limitations that sway the scope of this study. This can be attributed to the method of snowball sampling that ended up being the main form of recruitment of participants. The participants were privileged in their demographic backgrounds. The majority of subjects were white and middle to upper class gay or bisexual men. All of the participants were also college educated. This sample of men was also restricted to the regions of Boulder and Denver, Colorado. There was a lack of size and diversity within the socio-economic factors in this sample. Some physical privileges participants had is that they possessed easy access to meeting others. Many of the men had their own cars. The participants also had access to a nonpublic place (such as a private residence) where they could be comfortable interacting with other men. These demographic characteristics do not fully embody all men that are active in the men seeking men online community.

The participants who agreed to be in this study were also comfortable enough to share and openly discuss aspects of their sexual orientation and identity. This would not be as feasible if all participants were not fully out or were highly concerned with maintaining their sexual privacy. Respondents were out to a fair amount of people in their lives, which adds to another level of privilege not every gay or bisexual male is able to have. This transparency in their orientation also ties into how they were able to be recruited in the study. Their out-ness translates into their ability to articulate and express how they feel about certain factors of dating in this type of culture and what they have learned from their mobile app usage. It is likely they have shared their thoughts or stories with others regarding the communicative on goings that have risen from these online sites.

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Ultimately, participants were granted many advantages that not all homosexual men have. This is rooted in the requirements of the study. In order to be eligible for recruitment these young adults needed to have continuous access to a smartphone and a mobile cellular network. At some point they also needed to be comfortable enough with their own sexuality to have met another man off of these sites. These everyday luxuries these men possessed in their day-to-day lives greatly dictate their experience and relationship they have within the gay dating community and their online presence via gay mobile apps.

### **Future Areas of Research**

The findings of this study reveal the important role gay apps serve the young adult millennial community in meeting men who are seeking men. Future research that includes a more widespread set of identities would be beneficial in attaining a more inclusive understanding as to how differing types of men are using these apps. With identities transcending into more widespread ethnicities, education levels, employment, economic standings, and geographic regions. It is important to note that while wanting to acquire more voices in research within this communicative field, respondents would need to have access to a mobile smartphone and cellular network. This minimizes sets of gay and bisexual men who do not have the means to attain online mobile connectivity.

A study that would be beneficial to attaining more information on men who are seeking men and their relationship with mobile dating apps, would be to incorporate heterosexual individuals. This study could identify key differences or similarities between these two populations. Specifically, this would help uncover the reasons as to why and how heterosexual individuals are inclined to download and use these mobile apps. This would be in contrast as to



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how homosexual males use these apps, who evidently have less alternatives when it comes to meeting potential dating partners. The study would also examine how these two populations disclose to others that they do in fact use mobile dating apps. This new research could pinpoint comparisons in present stigmas that both groups face from using the apps. As prior qualitative research usually focuses on either homosexual or heterosexual individuals, it would be worthwhile to conduct a more unrestricted and merged analysis among these two groups.

An additional area of future research continued from the findings in this study would be to analyze the nature of gay long term relationships that derived from mobile apps. Specifically analyzing the length of these relationships, relationship maintenance strategies the couples partake in, and also comparing the qualities of gay relationships formed outside of meeting online. This would aim to observe how relationships may or may not differ without the use of an online dating technology for the initial meeting. An aspect that I would want to focus on within this particular area of research would be to also see how currently committed gay couples or single individuals whom were previously in a long-term relationship, expressed their thoughts on open relationships. Open relationships among gay men appear to be more common within the male seeking male online community. In fact, most of the twelve participants from this study expressed their differentiating beliefs on open relationships. Some of the respondents claimed open relationships defeat the purpose of having a long-term relationship, while others considered it being the most ideal form of a relationship for themselves, and some interviewees' opinions lied somewhere between these two judgements. It would be beneficial to further understand how couples reach an agreement on this type of arrangement, and the terms and conditions that would be applied to it. As rising amounts of young gay adults are meeting other men like themselves

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from mobile apps, it would be of great importance to study the characteristics of their formed long-term relationships.

**Conclusion**

This study provided insight and a voice on how these frequently overlooked men in academic research are personally engaging with mobile dating applications. It was evident that while the participants remained fairly uniform with one another in terms of their socio-economic statuses there was still great fluctuations present among them. Especially in terms of their own articulated theories, opinions, and justifications for understanding their usage of the apps. As the software on these gay mobile applications are more or less centered on the specific purpose of casually meeting a potential hookup partner, there are much more nuances occurring. Ultimately these apps serve as a now required tool in the gay and bisexual male dating world. As more stress and importance are placed on the apps, they in turn become more complicated. This is in terms of users conveying to other users of what their intended goals are in operating them.

A consensus observed among the twelve accounts of the interviewees was that they believe the apps serve as a mediated place where one can easily meet with men in their surrounding geographic regions. They accept the traits of the apps both good, bad, and shallow, for what they are. However, they know that a gay sexual tension will always be present among two men who met and are both attracted to one another. This reveals that this restraint to not be physically intimate with another male met from the apps is a challenge. Hookups among these participants in the study were used as testing mechanism in filtering potential long term romantic partners. All participants had the shared goal of finding another person to settle down with, but concurred a hookup is what suffices in the interim of this awaited long-term matching.

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## Appendix A

## Interview Questions:

1.	What's your definition of dating?
2.	Where would you find other people you wanted to get to know better with the intentions of possibly dating?
3.	Have you ever downloaded or used a dating app? If so, which ones?
4.	What are your goals for using these app?
5.	Do you think others have the same goals as yourself?
6.	What were your initial reactions to the apps?
7.	Are there any general differences you have noticed between these apps?
8.	What made you want to use these particular apps?
9.	Do you still use them? If so, why or why not?
10.	Have you ever met up with someone from these apps? If so, why or why not?
11.	If you did meet up with someone how did it go? Did you have your goals met?
12.	Would you ever consider dating someone from these apps?
13.	How would you feel dating someone you have previously hooked up with?
14.	Would you prefer to meet someone in person with the intentions of traditionally courting/dating or just hooking up?
15.	When you meet what do you do next?
16.	From these sites do you usually meet someone to grab a coffee/go out on a date with, or is it just to do a hookup?

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17.	Do you feel there is a pressure to present yourself in a certain way within these apps/sites or just the gay community in general?
18.	Is there a certain image you are trying to project?
19.	Do you want to be in a relationship with another man? If so, when do you see yourself doing this? Do you have the intentions of traditionally "settling down" with someone?

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## Appendix B

Recruitment Email:

Hello,

My name is Austin Uteda, I am an Honors student in the Communication Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder. I am conducting research for my honors thesis project about young gay adults' engagement with gay dating sites/apps and their experience with meeting others face to face from these online venues.

To be eligible to participate in this study you must:

- be between the ages of 18-26
- be willing to be interviewed
- have used a dating site/app in the past and must be comfortable enough to talk about your experience with them

If you are interested in participating and would like further information about the interview questions and setting up a meeting place to conduct the actual interview, please contact me at this email address:

[Austin.Uteda@Colorado.edu](mailto:Austin.Uteda@Colorado.edu)

I look forward to meeting those interested and appreciate your participation!

Best,

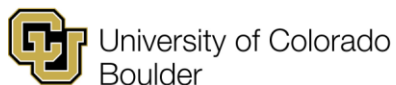
Austin Uteda



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## Appendix C

## IRB Approval Letter



Institutional Review Board  
563 UCB  
Boulder, CO 80309  
Phone: 303.735.3702  
Fax: 303.735.5185  
FWA: 00003492

## APPROVAL

20-Jan-2017

Dear Austin Uteda,

On **20-Jan-2017** the IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Submission:	Initial Application
Review Category:	Exempt - Category 2
Title:	Young Gay Adults' Personal Engagement With Contemporary Hookup Culture: Through An Interpersonal Communication Perspective
Investigator:	Uteda, Austin
Protocol #:	17-0014
Funding:	None
Documents Approved:	Protocol; 17-0014 Consent Form (20Jan17); Solicitation Info; Interview Schedule;
Documents Reviewed:	Consent Form; HRP-211: FORM - Initial Application v7;

The IRB approved the protocol on **20-Jan-2017**.

Click the link to find the approved documents for this protocol: [Summary Page](#) Use copies of these documents to conduct your research.

In conducting this protocol you must follow the requirements listed in the [INVESTIGATOR MANUAL \(HRP-103\)](#).

Sincerely,  
Douglas Grafel  
IRB Admin Review Coordinator  
Institutional Review Board