Published in final edited form as:

J Homosex. 2013 January ; 60(1): 120–145. doi:10.1080/00918369.2013.735945.

Sexual Venue Selection and Strategies for Concealment of Same-Sex Behavior Among Non-Disclosing Men Who Have Sex with Men and Women

Eric W. Schrimshaw, Ph.D., Martin J. Downing Jr., Ph.D., and Karolynn Siegel, Ph.D.

Department of Sociomedical Sciences, Mailman School of Public Health Columbia University, New York, NY, USA

Abstract

In order to conceal their same-sex behavior, men who have sex with men and women (MSMW) who do not disclose their same-sex behavior to female partners must be cautious in their attempts to find potential male partners. This study interviewed 46 non-gay identified, non-disclosing MSMW to identify the venues where they meet male sexual partners and the strategies they use to reduce the likelihood of discovery when at such venues. Most (74%) reported meeting a male partner in a sexual venue (e.g., bar/club, park) in the past year. Strategies to reduce the risk of discovery while seeking male partners included: 1) avoiding certain venues; 2) attending venues away from home; 3) meeting partners on the Internet, 4) preferring venues that have potential non-sexual uses, 5) having sex at the partner's place, and 6) limiting their on-site sexual activities.

These findings provide insight into the coping strategies these men use to manage the conflicting needs to conceal their behavior and meet sexual partners.

Keywords

Concealment; Disclosure; Stigma; Masculinity; Bisexuality; Sexual Venues

Considerable recent media attention has been paid to the phenomenon of “men on the down low” – that is, non-gay identifying men who have sex with men and women (MSMW), but do not disclose their same-sex behavior to their wives, girlfriends or others (Denizet-Lewis, 2003; King, 2004; Vargas, 2003). Of central concern for this population is their need to conceal all aspects of their same-sex sexual behavior in order to preserve an outwardly heterosexual identity (Finlinson, Colón, Robles, & Soto, 2006; Lapinski, Braz, & Maloney, 2010; Lichtenstein, 2000; Reback & Larkins, 2010; Wheeler, 2006; Williams, Wyatt, Resell, Peterson, & Asuan-O'Brien, 2004). Indeed, several studies have estimated that 67% - 85% of MSMW and/or men on the down low do not disclose their same-sex behavior to their female sexual partners (i.e., Agyemang, Wallace, & Liebman, 2008; Kalichman, Roffman, Picciano, & Bolan, 1998; Weatherburn, Hickson, Reid, Davies, & Crosier, 1998; Wolitski, Jones, Wasserman, & Smith, 2006). However, this desire to prevent discovery poses challenges to their ability to identify and meet potential male sexual partners. Specifically, non-disclosing MSMW must negotiate their need to conceal their behavior while also selectively disclosing in order to find and attract potential male sexual partners. This need to

Address correspondence to: Eric Schrimshaw, Center for the Psychosocial Study of Health & Illness, Department of Sociomedical Sciences, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, 722 West 168th Street, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10032. Ph: 212-304-6489, Fx: 212-304-7268, es458@columbia.edu.

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality, San Juan, Puerto Rico, November 2008.

avoid discovery may dictate the venues (e.g., bars, parks, the Internet) where non-disclosing MSMW choose to meet male partners (hereafter referred to as “sexual venues”) as well as where sexual activity sometimes occurs. There has been almost no research that focuses on the motivations behind frequenting or avoiding specific sexual venues by non-disclosing MSMW in their pursuit of same-sex encounters. The current report examines how the need to minimize the likelihood of discovery plays a role in the ways non-disclosing MSMW meet their potential male partners, the sexual venues they feel comfortable attending to meet these male partners, and the strategies they use to reduce the risk of being discovered when they do attend sexual venues.

Stigma and Concealment Strategies

The primary concern for non-gay identifying, non-disclosing MSMW is their fear of discovery, which requires them to conceal their same-sex activity from friends, family, and female partners (Finlinson et al., 2006; Lapinski et al., 2010; Lichtenstein, 2000; Reback & Larkins, 2010; Wheeler, 2006; Williams et al., 2004). One reason for this concern stems from their fear of being stigmatized or labeled as homosexual if discovered (Finlinson et al., 2006; Lapinski et al., 2010; Malebranche, Arriola, Jenkins, Dauria, & Patel, 2010; Williams et al., 2004). Indeed, Malebranche and colleagues (2010) recently concluded that stigma was the primary reason for non-disclosure among Black MSMW. Another possible reason for concealment of same-sex behavior is to attempt to preserve one’s social character (Karp, 1973), which these non-disclosing MSMW may see as dependent on maintaining the public image of heterosexuality and masculinity. Research has in fact found that some MSMW express a desire to be seen as straight and masculine (Kendall, Herrera, Caballero, & Campero, 2007; Miller, Serner, & Wagner, 2005), and consequently decide not to identify as bisexual because they associate this term with being feminine (Wheeler, 2006). Additional reasons for concealment include the desire to protect existing relationships with women (Humphreys, 1970/2007; Lichtenstein, 2000; Malebranche et al. 2010; Reece & Dodge, 2003) and because of their desire to have a family (Miller et al., 2005). A spouse’s discovery of non-monogamous same-sex activity by MSMW often results in termination of marriage (Buxton, 2006), given the greater distress women experience in response to infidelity with a same-sex male partner (Wiederman & LaMar, 1998).

Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical approach argues that individuals with a stigmatized identity or behavior maintain two separate selves, in the case of these MSMW, a “frontstage” heterosexual life that is acceptable for viewing by others and a “backstage” bisexual life that is off-limits from the public (including family, friends, and acquaintances). Indeed, Goffman suggests that behaviors take place in separate regions of physical space – the frontstage space (e.g., home, work) and backstage spaces (e.g., sites of same-sex behavior). Given the existence of these two regions, there is a continual challenge in maintaining separation of the frontstage and backstage spaces. However, stigma theory would also suggest that complete concealment is impossible (Goffman, 1963), because in order to meet other male sexual partners, non-disclosing MSMW must selectively disclose their sexual interests to potential male partners. As such, these MSMW must negotiate a balance between concealing their same-sex behavior in order to preserve their heterosexual identity, while also making their same-sex sexual interests known to others in order to meet potential sexual partners. Given this tension between concealment and disclosure, these non-disclosing MSMW must adopt strategies which preserve concealment to some while disclosing to others.

Goffman (1963) theorized a number of information control strategies that an individual may utilize in an effort to avoid having their secret lives discovered. One such strategy is passing, in which an individual leads a double life where he/she identifies as, and is identifiable as, part of one group in order to create or preserve a certain existence (e.g., heterosexual,

married), but when in the company of similar others (e.g., gay, bisexual men) will portray himself as a member of that group so that he/she can take advantage of what it has to offer (e.g., sex partners). Goffman also discussed how an individual will often maintain a physical distance between one's residence or where one has associates and the area where he/she engages in stigmatized behaviors in order to preserve his/her anonymity. In other words, areas close to home are "out-of-bounds places" for stigmatized behaviors because they present a greater risk of discovery (p. 81). Finally, people may conceal (through secrecy, privacy, etc.) their participation in unconventional behaviors from outsiders (Karp, 1973). The current study examined the use of various information control strategies within the context of men's selection of sexual venues. We anticipated that men would select venues for meeting male partners based on their ability to control personal information and reduce the risks that others they may know will discover their same-sex behavior.

Sexual Venue Selection and Use

Although the literature on non-disclosing MSMW and the venues in which they meet their sexual partners is sparse, there is evidence that MSMW (regardless of disclosure) frequent a number of both public and private settings as they look for same-sex encounters including both gay and straight bars (Goldbaum, Purdue, & Higgins, 1996; Prestage & Drielsma, 1996; Weatherburn, Hickson, & Reid, 2003), cruising areas/parks (Bennett, Chapman, & Bray, 1989; Goldbaum et al., 1996; Hospers, Debets, Ross, & Kok, 1999; Huber & Kleinplatz, 2002; Prestage & Drielsma, 1996; Williams et al., 2004), public bathrooms (Humphreys, 1970/2007; Prestage & Drielsma, 1996; Williams et al., 2004), gyms (Goldbaum et al., 1996; Halkitis, Moeller, & Pollock, 2008; Weatherburn et al., 2003), bathhouses (Goldbaum et al., 1996; Huber & Kleinplatz, 2002; Van Beneden et al., 2002; Williams et al., 2004), and the Internet (Chiasson et al., 2007; Hightow et al., 2006; Tikkanen & Ross, 2003; Weatherburn et al., 2003).

Gay bars and clubs have historically been an important site for gay men to meet male sexual partners (e.g., Grov, Hirshfield, Remien, Humberstone, & Chiasson, in press; Grov, Parsons, & Bimbi, 2007; Weatherburn et al., 2003). However, for non-disclosing MSMW who are concerned about discovery of their same-sex behavior, attending a gay bar or club may be viewed as posing too great a risk of discovery and therefore they may be less likely to attend such places when seeking male partners. Although non-disclosing MSMW have not been examined, some research has found that MSMW were no less likely to attend gay bars than MSM (Kalichman et al., 1998; O'Leary, Purcell, Remien, Fisher, & Spikes, 2007), while other studies suggest they are less likely to attend gay bars (Hightow et al., 2006; Wolitski et al., 2006). Similarly, Hightow et al. (2006) found that MSMW were less likely to attend gay bars and clubs than men who only have sex with other men. Nevertheless, gay bars and clubs still appear to be a major source of male sexual partners for MSMW, with 37% attending in the past 3 months (O'Leary et al., 2007), 33% - 50% attending in the past year (Hightow et al., 2006; Wolitski et al., 2006) and 84% attending in the past five years (Kalichman et al., 1998).

Other commonly reported venues where MSMW (both disclosing and non-disclosing) may seek male sexual partners are public parks and restrooms. Indeed, some research has suggested that MSMW are more likely to frequent public sex environments than MSM (Engler et al., 2005). There are a number of reasons why MSMW may be particularly attracted to meeting men in public sex environments. In his investigation of homosexual behavior in public bathrooms, Humphreys (1970/2007) found that a majority of the men he observed and subsequently surveyed were married and had deliberately chosen this type of public sex venue in an attempt to avoid being discovered by their wives. Indeed, other research has suggested that both gay and bisexual men keep their activities at the parks and

restrooms secret (Reece & Dodge, 2003). Because sex in public parks and restrooms typically occurs on site (rather than meeting in one spot, such as a bar, and going elsewhere; Goldbaum et al., 1996), research has also suggested that non-gay-identified MSM utilize parks and restrooms because they cannot take their male partners to their home due to the risk of discovery (Williams et al., 2004). While this literature has advanced our understanding of where MSMW potentially find male partners, little is known about the reasons why non-disclosing MSMW utilize (or avoid) private or public venues in their pursuits.

Other non-disclosing MSMW avoid gay venues and neighborhoods to maintain their straight identity (Reback & Larkins, 2010). Therefore some men may be particularly attracted to the anonymity provided by the Internet when pursuing other men for sex (e.g., Dew, Brubaker, & Hays, 2006; Lichtenstein, 2000; Ross, Rosser, McCurdy, & Feldman, 2007). Bisexually-identified and bisexually active men have both been found to commonly use the Internet to meet male partners (Chiasson et al., 2007; Grov, in press; Grov et al., in press; Hightow et al., 2006; Tikkanen & Ross, 2003; Weatherburn et al., 2003). Furthermore, non-disclosing MSMW who have not disclosed their same-sex activity to friends, family, and/or colleagues are more likely to have met a partner using the Internet than men who had disclosed (Weatherburn et al., 2003). Similarly, gay sex chat room users were more likely to be bisexual and live with a female partner or family members, and less likely to disclose their same-sex behavior than men who never used these chat rooms (Tikkanen & Ross, 2003). However, the reasons MSMW offer for why they prefer the Internet (e.g., they are attracted to the anonymity) remain less examined (see Ross et al., 2007).

Non-disclosing MSMW are often limited as to where they can carry out same-sex activity. Previous studies have shown that these men may be hindered by their living situations (i.e., live with a wife, girlfriend, family, or roommates) making it difficult, if not impossible to bring a male partner back to their home (Reece & Dodge, 2003; Williams et al., 2004). As a result of such constraints, some may prefer to have sex at their partner's place or to utilize a sex-on-site venue. Indeed, research has found that non-gay identifying MSMW are more likely to have sex at their partner's place than at their own place (Prestage & Drielsma, 1996) and MSMW are less likely to have sex in a private residence than gay-identified men (Engler, et al., 2005). These findings suggest that non-disclosing MSMW may be particularly attracted to having sex at a partners' place, at a public sex-on-site venue (e.g., cruising park, restroom) or private sex-on-site venue (e.g., bathhouse, video booth store).

Given the critical importance of concealment to non-gay identifying MSMW who do not disclose their same sex behavior to their female partners, we hypothesized that the selection of venues for meeting their male sexual partners would be influenced by their desire to maintain an outwardly heterosexual identity. In this study we examine the venues where non-disclosing MSMW meet their male sexual partners and the reasons why they prefer some venues over others. Following Goffman's (1963) suggestion that individuals who engage in stigmatized behavior may also engage in a variety of information control strategies to preserve their non-stigmatized identity, we also examine the strategies MSMW report using to select which sexual venues they feel comfortable attending to meet their male partners as well as the strategies they use to reduce the likelihood that they will be discovered by attending such venues.

Method

Participants

The data presented in this report are drawn from an ethnically diverse sample of 46 non-gay identified MSMW who had not disclosed their same-sex behavior to their female partners.

To be eligible for participation, men had to: (1) be 18 years of age or older; (2) not publicly or privately self-identify (i.e., “think of themselves”) as gay; (3) report having anal or oral sex with a man in the past year; (4) report having vaginal, anal, or oral sex in the past year with a woman to whom they were married or had an ongoing relationship lasting 3 months or longer; (5) have not told any of their female sexual partners of the past year about their same-sex behavior; (6) speak fluent English; and (7) currently reside in the New York City metropolitan area (including New Jersey and Connecticut). The sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Procedure

Although attempts were made to recruit men from each of the following venues, participants were obtained from gay and mixed-sexuality bars/clubs (4%), cruising parks (7%), bathhouses (0%), community-based HIV agencies (11%), Internet sites (24%), newspaper advertisements (33%), and through non-participant friend referrals (22%). Efforts were made to recruit study participants from venues, Internet sites, and newspapers that target both the gay and the broader non-gay (heterosexual) community. Both venue-based and Internet-based recruitment used a targeted sampling approach (Watters & Biernacki, 1989) in which specific venues/websites were randomly selected as recruitment sites from a larger sampling frame to reduce potential bias. For venue-based recruitment (in bars, bathhouses, parks, etc), an ethnically diverse team of male recruiters approached all men who entered the venue to give them a card containing recruitment information. For Internet-based recruitment, information was posted in chat rooms and bulletin boards frequented by MSM, but we did not directly message men within a chat room. A single newspaper advertisement was placed in a freely distributed daily non-gay (mainstream) newspaper. Finally, recruitment cards were left in waiting areas of 3 community-based HIV agencies. A full description of the sampling strategies has been provided in an earlier report from this study (Siegel et al., 2008).

Recruitment took place in July and August, 2006. All recruitment materials (i.e. information cards, advertisements) stated that we were looking to interview men who had sex with both women and men, and whose female partners did not know about their sex with men. When possible, recruitment materials provided the study website address for more information and requested interested participants to telephone the researchers to learn more about the study and to be screened for eligibility. Because certain websites do not allow the posting of telephone numbers or website addresses, participants seeing notices about the study on these sites were asked to email the researchers upon which telephone and website addresses were provided. When potentially eligible men called the study phone line, a male interviewer answered, restated the aforementioned recruitment information, and requested permission to ask the caller a series of questions to determine their eligibility (see Siegel et al., 2008 for a complete description of the screening questionnaire and process).

Eligible men were invited to a single meeting with an interviewer at the researchers' offices. On average, the meeting lasted 3 hours. Interviews were conducted by a racially diverse team of male and female interviewers, all of whom had masters-level or higher training and were experienced interviewers. After providing written informed consent, men completed an interviewer-administered questionnaire that elicited basic sociodemographic characteristics that allowed confirmation of their eligibility (e.g., non-disclosure to female partners, sexual behavior in past year). As part of this questionnaire, participants' private sexual identity (“how you think of yourself”) was assessed. This private self-identity, rather than their public or social identity (which was universally heterosexual), is used to describe the participants' sexual identity in this report. Next, participants were asked to complete a set of quantitative measures administered via audio computer assisted self interviewing (ACASI). Following completion of the measures, men participated in a semi-structured focused

interview (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990) lasting approximately two hours. All interviews and measures were completed in English. At the end of the interview, participants received \$75 in cash, and were reimbursed for their transportation costs.

Information was gathered on the sexual venues in which these MSMW met their male sexual partners in both the past 3 months (via ACASI) and in the past year (in the semi-structured interview). As part of the assessment of their behavior with each of their 3 most recent male sexual partners in the past 3 months, participants were asked where they had first met each sexual partner, with a list of possible venues provided as response options including parks or other public places (e.g. public restroom), bars or clubs, the Internet (e.g. websites, chat rooms, and advertisements), bathhouses, gyms and health clubs, or other venues reported by the participants. Similarly, as part of the semi-structured in-depth interview, each man was asked, "In the past year, have you actually met any of your male sexual partners in any of the following places...?" Then each venue was read from a list of possible venues and the interviewers systematically recorded which venues men had met a male sexual partner in the past year. Interviewers then prompted the participants to talk about why they visited these places and whether they had engaged in sexual activity on site. For those who reported that sexual encounters were taken off site, additional questions were used to determine where the men went and why.

Data analysis

Quantitative data from ACASI and from the interviews were entered into SPSS version 16 and the prevalence of men who met male sexual partners in each venue was examined. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Transcripts of the qualitative interviews ranged in length from 50 to approximately 200 single-spaced pages. These texts were then systematically read and coded using a process of thematic content analysis consistent with that developed by Weiss (1994) and Boyatzis (1998) and further refined by our own extensive experience. A research assistant read all of the interviews and extracted all sections of the text regarding the places where they met their male sexual partners. In addition to participants' responses to the direct questions (described above) about specific venues where they had met their male sexual partners, a computer program was used to search the full interviews for any references to a particular venue (e.g., bathhouse, bar, club, park, Internet, etc). Two additional researchers then read all of the extracted text and developed a preliminary set of themes related to the venues where these men meet other men, why they frequented those venues, and why they avoided other venues. The themes developed by the two researchers were then compared and discussed to arrive at a mutually agreed upon set of thematic codes. However, because of the semi-structured nature of the interviews (in which not all questions were asked of every participant, questions were not asked in the same order, and the interview guide was modified over time), inter-rater reliability was not computed or meaningful (Morse, 1997). However, unanimous agreement between the two researchers was obtained on the themes identified and described in this report. Finally, direct quotations were selected by the authors that most clearly reflected and substantiated the participants' strategies selecting and attending sexual venues to meet male partners while still maintaining concealment of their same-sex behavior.

Results

The men reported meeting their male sexual partners in a variety of venues (see Table 2) with bars/clubs, cruising parks, and the Internet among those most commonly reported. In contrast, gyms, video booth stores, and bathhouses were the least commonly reported. One quarter (26%) reported not meeting a male partner in the past year at any of the sexual venues asked about (i.e., 8 reported only existing male partners who were not met in the past year, and 4 reported only meeting male partners through friends, work, or from their

neighborhood). Given the importance of avoiding discovery to these men, we were interested in how these non-disclosing MSMW were able to attend these sexual venues without discovery. Following Goffman's (1963) suggestion that individuals engaging in stigmatized behavior may also engage in information control strategies to preserve their non-stigmatized identity, we analyzed the qualitative data to examine the strategies they used to reduce the likelihood of discovery and preserve their publicly heterosexual identity while attending various sexual venues. Below we describe the strategies used by non-disclosing MSMW.

Avoiding Certain Venues

One strategy for attempting to conceal their same-sex behavior was to avoid those venues that participants viewed as posing the greatest threat of discovery. Indeed, many of the non-disclosing MSMW reported that they did not attend public venues because they were fearful of being observed or discovered there by female partners, friends, family members, or acquaintances. For example, when asked whether he meets any of his male partners in sexual venues, a 53-year-old straight-identified Black participant reported:

No. Too, too risky of a, well, when you trying to be on the DL, as I am, going to those places, you run the risk of being seen or recognized by someone you may or not want to be seen or recognized. If you go to a park or a bathhouse, you never know who might be going by in a vehicle and see you enter one of those places. Someone could see you going into this bar or park. I mean, for example for parks – what the hell are you doing entering a park at 4:00 in the morning or 1:00, or 1 AM? Come on. Going to a bar, if this bar is known to be a gay bar, how do you explain to somebody [who] happen[s] to look out the window of the bus and see you going inside a gay bar, how do you explain that?

Although the above participant viewed discovery as possible at almost all venues, most participants viewed only certain venues as posing a significant risk of discovery. For example, a 38-year old Black man who did not self-identify as either bisexual or straight (but who has “urges for both men and women”) focused specifically on bars and clubs as posing the risk of discovery:

Respondent: Because it's open.

Interviewer: Open?

R: It's too open. Anybody can see you... You never know who, this is a small world, you never know who might, I'm just, you know, I don't do those.

Although public parks were a common pick-up site among some men in our sample, others considered them problematic due to the possibility of being observed. For example, a 40-year old, Black man who identified as sexually “curious,” when asked if he ever met a male partner in a park said:

R: Oh, I've never been to one of those, probably, I don't know, probably because people might know you or something....yeah, I never, I know some, I know of some parks like that but, I never, I never, I never been to them.

I: Why, why is that?

R: 'Cause people, you might see somebody you know, or somebody might see you around there that you know, or things like that, you know. And it will get back to your wife; get back to your family.

Finally, even the Internet, which was viewed by many participants as the most private possible venue, caused concern for some participants. Specifically, some men were

concerned about the possibility of leaving a trace of activity (i.e., of visiting a site where one can meet sexual partners) on their computer. For example, the same 40-year old Black man quoted above also noted his fear of discovery if he were to use the Internet to meet male partners:

No. I've never, no, um plus now, my kids and my wife they usually too much on it, and I don't want something to pop back up with something like that. You know, I, I thought of that... What if I'm just clicking on just to check it and I think I take it off of there and it pops back up or something? I always thought of that. Uh, so I never, I never you know, never, um did that, you know.

Attendance of Venues Away from Home

Given that most of the men did not meet male partners through friends, work or the neighborhood (62%), in the qualitative interviews men described their strategy of avoiding potential sexual venues that were near their homes or neighborhoods for fear of being witnessed by family, friends, and neighbors. For example, some who lived outside of Manhattan (e.g., Brooklyn, Bronx, or New Jersey) reported that they felt somewhat more comfortable attending venues in Manhattan. One 56-year-old bisexually-identified Latino participant, when asked if he ever worried about the possibility of people finding out about his same-sex behavior, reported:

I'm not. I don't hang out like in my neighborhood. I live in the Bronx, you know. I don't hang out there ... Everything I ever did, all my dirt, whatever I did, I did in Manhattan right? I live in the Bronx now, but I leave the Bronx in the morning and I go to Manhattan. I either go to my job or I go to my program or wherever. ... See, so nobody knows where I live at. They don't know what I am doing.

Similarly, another participant, a 37-year-old bisexually-identified Black man, reported that he does not use the Internet to meet male partners for fear that his girlfriend will find out. Rather, he reported that although he lives in Brooklyn he meets his male partners at the Chelsea Pier, a neighborhood sports and recreational complex in Manhattan. When asked why, he explained:

I: And why do you go there?

R: To meet men.

I: Why there, as opposed to other places?

R: Nobody knows me. I don't have to worry about running into anybody that I know. I don't know. It's just – I'm just there among other people and they don't know what I'm doing there, and you know, they don't care to know. That's all.

Actually, Chelsea Pier is my favorite place to go.

This same strategy of only meeting male partners at a considerable distance from their home was used by men to conceal same-sex behavior from both their wives/girlfriends, as well as from their family. For example, a 45-year-old bisexually-identified Black participant reported using this strategy to conceal his behavior from both his girlfriend and his family. When asked if he ever worried about his female partners finding out about his sex with men, he reported:

R: I really didn't worry too much because I don't do it around them [his female partners]. They don't come and hang out in the park [Central Park in Manhattan]. They don't. My family don't come hang out in the park. So I'm not really worried about that....

I: Are there things you do to make sure that your family doesn't find out?

R: Stay far away, when I do – when I do the activities. Far away. ...They're over in the Bronx. They stay in the Bronx. They don't go nowhere else. So I'm pretty secure at that. I'll just stay right here [in Manhattan].

Similarly, a 30-year old bisexually-identified White participant who frequented video booths made an effort to meet men at this venue because they were located in an area of town where he was not likely to run into a female partner:

R: Yeah, yeah, it's near where I am a lot, so.

I: Okay.

R: Yeah it's on the other side of the town where, it's not where [name of girlfriend] is.

I: Okay so you have no worries of.

R: Yeah, minimal worries, little concerns about going in and out.

Preference for Meeting Male Partners on the Internet

The Internet was the venue most consistently viewed by participants as allowing them to confidentially identify and arrange to meet potential male sexual partners. The fear of discovery in a public setting led many of the men to focus primarily or exclusively on meeting male partners through the Internet. When asked why he goes on the Internet to find men, a 29-year old bisexually-identified Latino participant noted:

R: Because nobody's watching you. You do it in your own home so you don't really need to go anywhere.

I: Okay. What do you like about that?

R: The secrecy I would say, you know, that nobody won't see you like, you know walking around whatever.

A majority of the men in the study also preferred the Internet because they viewed it as a particularly easy or convenient way to meet other men. This was important for many men who had limited time to find and meet male partners (e.g., before wife gets home, an evening when girlfriend has class, etc). Some of the non-disclosing MSMW also pointed out that the Internet was a more efficient way to meet someone than traveling to a venue and talking with several individuals in hopes that someone there might be interested in having sex with them. For example, when asked to explain why he used this venue to meet men, a 28-year old bisexually-identified Asian participant remarked on its time saving function:

Um, it's uh—it's easy and it's a um pretty—I would say it's pretty-pretty efficient, because you know you don't have to spend a lot of time trying to talk somebody up and you can pretty much tell, um, whether or not you're interested in somebody or if somebody's interested in you pretty quickly.

Similarly, a 20-year old Latino participant who identified as sexually free explained how the Internet offers him the opportunity to efficiently search to find a desirable man:

R: I just—when you hit a search/find or the search link, you know, you just put in a description you are looking for and just get a guy. That's it.

I: Um-hum. So you can pick out whichever—what you are looking for?

R: Yeah.

Additionally, men saw the Internet's potential to allow them to meet other men in a similar situation as their own, that is, concealing their same sex behavior from their female partners.

For example, a 22-year-old bisexually-identified Latino participant told us when asked why he used the Internet to meet guys:

Cause the Internet got, that's where we got a lot of 'em. You can find a lot of us guys that fit more of my type on the Internet. On the Internet you got usually guys that is a DL [down low]...

Finally, the Internet was perceived as a space in which one could easily "cover their tracks" so to speak and thereby avoid discovery. For instance, a 23-year-old bisexually-identified Latino participant explained:

...it's really hard for anybody to keep track of what you're doing. And if you're home alone if you have privacy enough, you could see anything online. I mean from you know uh models to just like chatting and a lot of places have temporary chats where you just log in as when you decide to go in and you could have a different log in every time. And you know it's just like...it's real disposable. So it's like there's no real you know trace of it. If I want I could just delete everything that I've been through and just like that's it. I don't have to ever touch it again. You know what I mean. I don't keep pictures of guys or myself, like unless I'm with my family, on my computer.

Preferring Venues that have Potential Non-sexual Uses

Although some men avoided certain sexual venues, others reported that they did attend venues, so long as that venue was not an exclusively gay-focused venue and had a potential non-sexual use which they could use as "cover story" if they were discovered there. Indeed, many men reported meeting partners in venues like mixed sexuality dance clubs, the park, or certain Internet sites (e.g., Craigslist), but felt comfortable doing so because if they were observed there, they could offer a non-sexual explanation for their presence. By using this strategy of attending only those venues viewed by others as non-sexual, these men were able to present a heterosexual image that would reduce or eliminate potential suspicions. However, despite reporting that they attended these venues for non-sexual purposes, nearly all of the men attending these venues knew there was the possibility for meeting male sexual partners in that venue as well. Rather than interpreting these inconsistencies in the reason for attending a particular venue as an example of dishonesty, these data instead appear to reflect the men's own duality between public (non-sexual) and private (potentially sexual) reasons for attending a particular venue; suggesting that venue attendance can have multiple motivations. For example, in the following excerpt a 25-year old bisexually-identified Latino respondent, talked about using the pretext of an event and listening to music as an explanation for attending a large nightclub frequented by both a straight and gay clientele:

I: So why would you go to this club rather than another venue...

R: For the clubs I would go to events too, you know what I mean? And to hear music. You know what I mean?

I: But why would you go there rather than, say another venue, another route like, like a park or the Internet, or a gym?

R: Um...I don't want to do that. 'Cause, I mean, you know, I don't want...Nobody knows about it. I want to keep it that way.

However, this same participant, when pressed further as to why he attends, said:

I: And how often would you go [to this club]?

R: Probably about every other weekend.

I: And how often, when you go to a bar or a club to meet men, how often do you actually meet someone?

R: Pretty much all the time.

I: So why do you go to bars or nightclubs to meet men?

R: I mean, I would go to meet men because I wanted sexual satisfaction. You know what I mean?

Many of the men excused their presence at potential sex venues by suggesting these visits were for “other” reasons (e.g. drinking, meeting up with friends, working out, reading the newspaper, etc.). However, men also recognized that these venues also allowed them to meet sexual partners. For example, a 22-year old bisexually-identified Latino man insisted that his attendance of the gym was solely for non-sexual reasons:

I never go out to just like meet guys...I don't care if I meet somebody or not. But the gym, never. The gym is strictly...I pay for that shit, you know. [LAUGH] I'm not going there just to look at guys. No I go to the gym. I work out, and sometimes, like I said, guys approach me.

However, elsewhere in the interview, this same participant reported meeting multiple sexual partners at the gym:

R: Um well I just joined the gym like a month ago. And I met like a couple guys there. Um, in the locker room actually I met a couple of guys. And um one came back to my house. The other one I went back to his house. And um that's basically the gist of it like okay we did it, whatever. And it's weird, I know I shouldn't have done it because I have to keep going back to the gym and keep seeing him. But you know, whatever, eventually I'll go to another one.

Similarly, a number of men also reported that they frequented public parks for purely non-sexual reasons. Although parks clearly have non-sexual uses, existence of cruising areas within many parks (including Central Park where this participant reported going) attests to their use for meeting sexual partners. For example, one 59-year old bisexually-identified Black respondent claimed that he was not hanging out in one of these sites for that purpose. He stated:

I don't go there to meet men. I'm just sitting there minding my business. They come and sit down and talk to me and I'm going, 'Why are they talking to me?' A lot of good-looking people walking by. Why do they stop and talk? ...I'm not bothering anybody. I'm sitting there reading my—I'm doing the crossword puzzle or reading the paper, I'm not bothering anybody.

However, this same participant, later in the interview, reported that he had indeed engaged in sexual activity with a man he met in the park:

I: And have you ever had unprotected sex while in the park?

R: We put a condom on, both had a condom, always had a condom.

Preference for Having Sex at Their Partner's Place

Another strategy to conceal their same-sex behavior reported by most participants was going back to a partner's residence rather than their own place to engage in sexual activity. For many, hosting partners at their own apartment was viewed as impossible because they lived with a wife, girlfriend, family, or roommates (61%). For example, a 41-year-old bisexually-identified Latino participant who lived with his family told us:

I: So do you take them back to your place?

R: I can't, because I don't live – I don't live alone. I live with my family. And I am not about to cause no ruckus.

Similarly, a 20-year-old Latino who identifies as “sexually free” also told us how living with his wife prevents him from taking men back to his home:

I: When you meet guys on the Internet, where do you go?

R: Um, I actually go to his place. Because I really don't, um, have time or the money to be paying for a hotel ... I don't have the place with my wife, so I go to his place.

Those men who lived alone also viewed having male partners in their home as too risky because they might be seen by a neighbor. For example, when asked why he never brings male partners back to his place, a 28-year-old bisexually-identified Asian participant told us:

Um, it's just, I don't feel comfortable. For one, I don't want them to know where I live You know, there are neighbors and people that – that I might run into in the elevators, by the entrance. Also I mean, when I'm fooling around with guys on the side, um, discretion and safety is always my primary concern.

Additionally many preferred that their partners not know where they lived for fear that they might show up uninvited or at an inopportune moment on another occasion. When asked why he never took men back to his place, a 22-year old bisexually-identified Latino expressed concern over the potential ramifications of a future, unwanted visit by a male partner:

Say he, like he might come back to my house one day and pop up on a visit. And, like, I don't know, he might put me out there; put my business out on the street.

The possibility of not only being discovered, but also of being gossiped about by a roommate prevented one 25-year old bisexually-identified White participant from bringing male partners back to his apartment. He explained:

Um, I think that's...I mean I didn't really want to take them back to my apartment 'cause, you know, I have roommates. And the people I lived with until recently they were sort of, they were very nosy... So they...it would be very...and one of the persons I was...was a friend of mine who's very sort of...basically if he saw a guy leaving...leaving my room everyone I've ever met would know within 24 hours.

Although many men reported preferring to go back to their male partner's apartment, rather than their own apartment, this was not always possible. When their partner was also married or had a girlfriend, other discreet alternatives had to be found. In these instances, for those who could afford it, some men viewed a hotel as affording the most privacy. For example, a 43-year-old bisexually-identified Black participant, when asked if he does anything to conceal his same-sex behavior from his female partner, said:

No, because it's always at a hotel. Um, there's never any, any indications of any of it in the house. We [his male partner] don't call each other at home. Ummmm, it's pretty discreet. I don't have to go out of my way to conceal it.

Limited On-Site Sexual Activities

Many of the men lived with a wife, girlfriend, family members, or roommates, with most reporting that they never brought male partners back to their apartments. However, as noted earlier, fears of discovery prevented some from engaging in sexual activity on site. Therefore, even participants who met men in parks and gyms often reported going elsewhere to engage in sexual activity as a strategy to avoid having this sexual behavior observed by

others. When asked why sexual encounters were taken off site after meeting guys at the gym, a 35-year old bisexually-identified Latino participant noted:

'Cause everybody else is having sex in those gyms. [LAUGH] And most of them gyms, they got cameras in it and they freak in the damn offices watching all that shit go on. I'm not stupid. I know what goes on. I've got a couple of brothers that work in gyms.

While a majority of participants preferred to engage in sexual activity with other men off site, some did mention having an encounter at a public venue. For example, a 20-year old, "sexually free" Latino participant, upon being asked if he has sex in the gym or if he goes elsewhere, reported:

Um, when it's self-masturbation, it just be in the gym, like in the showers. He's in his, um, cubicle and I am in my cubicle, like so, you know, get a peek, and if it's a mutual masturbation you know you want to go the little more extra, sometimes it's in the shower, and sometimes we go outside the gym. There will be parking lot—you could do it there.

However, participants who engaged in sexual activity on site reported that fear of discovery limited their sex-on-site behavior. Indeed, they suggested that on-site behavior was only possible when the conditions were right to avoid being observed. For example, a 37-year old bisexually-identified, Black participant told us that unless it was dark out, he only had oral sex in the park because it can occur quickly minimizing the chances of being caught in the act:

I: And when you go to the park to meet men, do you usually have sex there, or do you usually go somewhere else?

R: If it's daytime, we go somewhere else. If it's at night, we might get a quickie in, in the bushes or something like that, you know, and uh, make plans to see each other somewhere else where we can, you know, be more comfortable or in a more safe and relaxed environment.

I: Well, explain to me first, what do you mean by a quickie?

R: A quick blowjob. I mean, if—if you're willing to suck my dick real quick, you know—

I: Okay. Do you ever fuck in the park?

R: I have. I have if it's late, if it's dark. If you can find a nice secluded spot, I have.

I: Okay and why would you go someplace else?

R: So we can—you know, it's a safer atmosphere. We don't have to worry about the police, you know. Um, we can really enjoy one another if he has his own place, or if he'll spring for a room or something like that, it's always better.

Similarly, another participant, a 28-year old bisexually-identified, Asian participant, also reported that he usually has only oral sex or mutual masturbation at the gym because of fears of discovery:

R: Um there's...never any penetration...when I do stuff with guys at the gym

I: Oral, either or?

R: Uh at most. At most, usually I get that [oral], usually—usually just masturbation...And um, because of, I mean, discretion issues. Because of the public space issues and it's just, you know, there are a lot of things that just doesn't happen in the gym.

Discussion

Considerable attention has been paid to the phenomenon of “men on the down low”, however studies have yet to focus on the motivations of non-disclosing MSMW for choosing certain venues to meet sexual partners while avoiding others. This study, while limited in its generalizability by a small convenience sample, provides us with a greater insight into the venues that this subpopulation uses for meeting and engaging in sexual activity with male partners. The data revealed that this sample of non-disclosing MSMW met their male partners in a variety of places. However, these findings indicate that the need for concealment plays an important role in the selection of sexual venues. Specifically, we found that non-disclosing MSMW have developed a number of strategies to manage the risk of discovery while meeting their competing needs to avoid discovery and locate sexual partners.

These findings provide insight into the ways in which non-disclosing MSMW avoid being stigmatized for their same-sex behaviors and attendance at gay sexual venues. Rather than being paralyzed by fear of discovery, or blatantly risk discovery by openly exploring gay social and sexual venues, the findings indicate that these men have adopted a number of strategies to cope with these two competing demands. These findings therefore provide evidence of how non-disclosing MSMW are able to negotiate sexual venues, maintain their dual lives, and preserve an outwardly heterosexual identity, while actively engaging in sexual behaviors with other men.

In addition to providing insight into how non-disclosing MSMW avoid stigmatization, the current study offers a look into how these MSMW employ various information control strategies to prevent those in their “frontstage” heterosexual lives from becoming aware of their “backstage” same-sex behaviors (Goffman, 1959). The findings presented here provide details about the information control strategies (e.g., concealment, distancing, and passing) that allow these men to maintain a separation between their dual lives.

The current findings both confirm and extend previous research in this area. Consistent with Reback and Larkins’ (2010) study of heterosexually-identified MSM, some men described here avoided “gay” venues, reporting that they preferred venues that had a potential “non-sexual” or “non-gay” use (e.g., mixed-sexuality club rather than a gay bar). This may have allowed participants to avoid the cognitive dissonance between their public heterosexual identity and their attendance at a gay sexual venue. Yet our men also were self-aware enough to recognize that despite having non-sexual motives for venue attendance, that attendance could (and often did) result in meeting sexual partners. However, this research also extends the work of Reback and Larkins (2010), in that our participants also described strategies that allowed them to attend explicitly gay venues but feel confident that they would not be observed or discovered. For example, participants described attending gay bars outside of their neighborhood where they were unlikely to encounter anyone who knew them.

Consistent with Weatherburn et al. (2003) and Tikkanen and Ross (2003) who found that non-disclosing men, bisexual men, and men who live with a female partner were more likely to use the Internet to meet male partners, our sample reported going online as one of the most commonly used methods of meeting male sexual partners. Further, our data builds on this earlier work to suggest potential reasons why these non-gay-identified non-disclosing MSMW are particularly attracted to the Internet. Consistent with Ross et al.’s (2007) findings among Latino MSM, the current study found that the ability to anonymously and conveniently meet potential male sexual partners over the Internet was the main reason non-disclosing MSMW regularly used this outlet.

Research examining the sexual venues where non-disclosing MSMW meet male sexual partners may be of importance for understanding the sexual risk behaviors of these men. Prior research with both MSM and MSMW (regardless of disclosure) has documented that men who meet their male partners at some sexual venues (e.g., the Internet, bars/clubs, bathhouses/sex clubs) are more likely to engage in sexual risk behaviors than men who meet partners at other venues (parks, public restrooms; e.g., Binson et al., 2001; Grov et al., 2007; Liao, Millett, & Marks, 2006; Parsons & Halkitis, 2002; Reece & Dodge, 2003). Coincidentally, we found that these non-disclosing MSMW are motivated to meet their male partners in the same types of venues where past research had documented higher levels of risk behavior (i.e., the Internet and bars/clubs). This finding suggests the possibility that the high levels of sexual risk behavior that has been found among these men (Siegel et al., 2008; Schrimshaw, Siegel, & Downing, 2010), may be indirectly linked to the desire to conceal (which in turn influences venue selection). Future research examining this mediational pathway is suggested. Further, the current report's finding that many non-disclosing MSMW indicated limiting their sexual behavior to only oral activities when attending sex-on-site venues (e.g., parks, gyms) out of fear of discovery may explain other findings that MSMW report fewer sexual risk behaviors in these venues (Schrimshaw et al., 2010). Finally, the finding that non-disclosing MSMW preferred to have sex at their partner's place rather than at a venue or at their own place may also help to explain the sexual risk behaviors of these MSMW. Specifically, previous research has suggested that MSM who engage in sex in a private residence are more likely to have unprotected sex than when in a more public or commercial venue (de Wit, de Vroome, Sandfort, & van Griensven, 1997; Woods et al., 2007).

Several limitations of the present study must be noted. First, this was a small convenience sample of non-disclosing MSMW. Although the sample was sufficient for the qualitative analyses reported here, the proportion of men who used each type of sexual venue may not replicate among a larger, more representative sample. Future researchers of this subpopulation of MSMW are encouraged to employ larger samples than were available here. Because this is a hidden population, there is no way to assess how representative the sample is of the larger population of MSMW or non-disclosing MSMW more specifically. Presumably our efforts to recruit the sample from a wide range of venues, emphasizing study confidentiality, and hosting interviews in a venue where few people would see them arrive or depart should have enhanced its representativeness. The current study also chose to focus on an ethnically diverse urban population, therefore these findings may not generalize to other subgroups of MSMW (e.g., exclusively Black men on the down low; rural MSMW). Further, the current study focused on MSMW who were non-disclosing and non-gay identified, and as such, may not generalize to more openly bisexual men. Despite these limitations, the current study provides important new insights into the venues where non-disclosing MSMW meet their male sexual partners and the strategies they use to negotiate sexual venue attendance while preventing discovery of their same-sex behaviors. As such, it expands our understanding of this much discussed population beyond that of sexual risk behaviors alone.

References

- Agyemang S, Wallance BC, Liebman RE. An exploratory Internet study of Black men on the down low: Potential factors related to non-disclosure to female partners and inconsistent condom use for Black men who have sex with men and women (MSMW). *The Journal of Equity in Health*. 2008; 1:79–97.
- Bennett G, Chapman S, Bray F. Sexual practices and “beats”: AIDS-related sexual practices in a sample of homosexual and bisexual men in the western area of Sydney. *The Medical Journal of Australia*. 1989; 151:309–314. [PubMed: 2593940]

- Binson D, Woods WJ, Pollack L, Paul J, Stall R, Catania JA. Differential HIV risk in bathhouses and public cruising areas. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2001; 91:1482–1486. [PubMed: 11527785]
- Boyatzis, RE. Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development. Sage; Thousand Oaks, CA: 1998.
- Buxton AP. When a spouse comes out: Impact on the heterosexual partner. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*. 2006; 13:317–332.
- Chiasson MA, Hirshfield S, Remien RH, Humberstone M, Wong T, Wolitski RJ. A comparison of on-line and off-line sexual risk in men who have sex with men: An event-based on-line survey. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*. 2007; 44:235–243.
- Denizet-Lewis B. Double lives on the down low. *New York Times Magazine*. Aug 3.2003 :28. Retrieved May 27, 2009, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/03/magazine/double-lives-on-the-down-low.html>.
- Dew B, Brubaker M, Hays D. From the alter to the Internet: Married men and their online sexual behavior. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*. 2006; 13:195–207.
- de Wit JBF, de Vroome EMM, Sandfort TGM, van Griensven GJP. Homosexual encounters in different venues. *International Journal of STD & AIDS*. 1997; 8:130–134. [PubMed: 9061413]
- Engler K, Otis J, Alary M, Mâsse B, Remis RS, Girard M, et al. An exploration of sexual behaviour and self-definition in a cohort of men who have sex with men. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*. 2005; 14:87–104.
- Finlinson HA, Colón HM, Robles RR, Soto M. Sexual identity formation and AIDS prevention: An exploratory study of non-gay-identified Puerto Rican MSM from working class neighborhoods. *AIDS and Behavior*. 2006; 10:531–539. [PubMed: 16736111]
- Goffman, E. The presentation of self in everyday life. Anchor Books; New York: 1959.
- Goffman, E. Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity. Simon & Schuster, Inc.; New York: 1963.
- Goldbaum G, Perdue T, Higgins D. Non-gay-identifying men who have sex with men: Formative research results from Seattle, Washington. *Public Health Reports*. 1996; 111:36–40. [PubMed: 8862155]
- Grov C. HIV risk and substance use in men who have sex with men surveyed in bathhouses, bars/clubs, and on craigslist.org: Venue of recruitment matters. *AIDS and Behavior*. in press. doi 10.1007/s10461-011-9999-6. craigslist.org
- Grov C, Hirshfield S, Remien RH, Humberstone M, Chiasson MA. Exploring the venue's role in risky sexual behavior among gay and bisexual men: An event-level analysis from a national online survey in the U.S. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. in press.
- Grov C, Parsons JT, Bimbi DS. Sexual risk behavior and venues for meeting sex partners: An intercept survey of gay and bisexual men in LA and NYC. *AIDS and Behavior*. 2007; 11:915–926. [PubMed: 17206536]
- Halkitis PN, Moeller RW, Pollock JA. Sexual practices of gay, bisexual, and other nonidentified MSM attending New York City gyms: Patterns of serosorting, strategic positioning, and context selection. *Journal of Sex Research*. 2008; 45:253–261. [PubMed: 18686154]
- Hightow LB, Leone PA, MacDonald PDM, McCoy SI, Sampson LA, Kaplan AH. Men who have sex with men and women: A unique risk group for HIV transmission on North Carolina college campuses. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. 2006; 33:585–593. [PubMed: 16641826]
- Hospers HJ, Debets W, Ross MW, Kok G. Evaluation of an HIV prevention intervention for men who have sex with men at cruising areas in the Netherlands. *AIDS and Behavior*. 1999; 3:359–366.
- Huber JD, Kleinplatz PJ. Sexual orientation identification of men who have sex with men in public settings in Canada. *Journal of Homosexuality*. 2002; 42:1–20. [PubMed: 12066985]
- Humphreys, L. Tearoom trade: Impersonal sex in public places. Aldine Transaction; Rutgers, NJ: 2007/1970.
- Kalichman SC, Roffman RA, Picciano JF, Bolan M. Risk for HIV infection among bisexual men seeking HIV-prevention services and risks posed to their female partners. *Health Psychology*. 1998; 17:320–327. [PubMed: 9697941]

- Karp DA. Hiding in pornographic bookstores: A reconsideration of the nature of urban anonymity. *Urban Life and Culture*. 1973; 1:427–451.
- Kendall T, Herrera C, Caballero M, Campero L. HIV prevention and men who have sex with women and men in México: Findings from a qualitative study with HIV-positive men. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. 2007; 9:459–472.
- King, JL. *On the down low: A journal into the lives of “straight” Black men who sleep with men*. Broadway Books; New York: 2004.
- Lapinski MK, Braz ME, Maloney EK. The down low, social stigma, and risky sexual behaviors: Insights from African-American men who have sex with men. *Journal of Homosexuality*. 2010; 57:610–633. [PubMed: 20455133]
- Liau A, Millett G, Marks G. Meta-analytic examination of online sex-seeking and sexual risk behavior among men who have sex with men. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. 2006; 33:576–584. [PubMed: 16540884]
- Lichtenstein B. Secret encounters: Black men, bisexuality and AIDS in Alabama. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*. 2000; 14:374–393. [PubMed: 11036584]
- Malebranche DJ, Arriola KJ, Jenkins TR, Dauria E, Patel SN. Exploring the “bisexual bridge”: A qualitative study of risk behavior and disclosure of same-sex behavior among Black bisexual men. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2010; 100:159–164. [PubMed: 19910348]
- Merton, RK.; Fiske, M.; Kendall, PL. *The focused interview: A manual of problems and procedures*. 2nd ed.. Free Press; New York: 1990.
- Miller M, Serner M, Wagner M. Sexual diversity among black men who have sex with men in an inner-city community. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2005; 82(Suppl. 1):i26–i34. [PubMed: 15738323]
- Morse JM. “Perfectly healthy, but dead”: The myth of inter-rater reliability. *Qualitative Health Research*. 1997; 7:445–447.
- O’Leary A, Purcell DW, Remien RH, Fisher HE, Spikes PS. Characteristics of bisexually active men in the Seropositive Urban Men’s Study (SUMS). *AIDS Care*. 2007; 19:940–946. [PubMed: 17712700]
- Prestage G, Drielsma P. Indicators of male bisexual activity in semimetropolitan New South Wales: Implications for HIV prevention strategies. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 1996; 20:386–392. [PubMed: 8908762]
- Parsons JT, Halkitis PN. Sexual and drug-using practices of HIV-positive men who frequent public and commercial sex environments. *AIDS Care*. 2002; 14:815–826. [PubMed: 12511214]
- Reback CJ, Larkins S. Maintaining a heterosexual identity: Sexual meanings among a sample of heterosexually identified men who have sex with men. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. 2010; 39:766–773. [PubMed: 19030977]
- Reece M, Dodge B. Exploring the physical, mental and social well-being of gay and bisexual men who cruise for sex on a college campus. *Journal of Homosexuality*. 2003; 46:111–136. [PubMed: 15086221]
- Ross MW, Rosser BRS, McCurdy S, Feldman J. The advantages and limitations of seeking sex online: A comparison of reasons given for online and offline sexual liaisons by men who have sex with men. *Journal of Sex Research*. 2007; 44:59–71. [PubMed: 17599265]
- Schrimshaw EW, Siegel K, Downing MJ Jr. Sexual risk behaviors with female and male partners met in different sexual venues among non-gay identified, non-disclosing MSMW. *International Journal of Sexual Health*. 2010; 22:167–179. [PubMed: 22059106]
- Siegel K, Schrimshaw EW, Lekas H, Parsons JT. Sexual behaviors of non-gay identified non-disclosing men who have sex with men and women. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. 2008; 37:720–735. [PubMed: 18506616]
- Tikkanen R, Ross MW. Technological tearoom trade: Characteristics of Swedish men visiting gay internet chat rooms. *AIDS Education and Prevention*. 2003; 15:122–132. [PubMed: 12739789]
- Van Beneden CA, O’Brien K, Modesitt S, Yusem S, Rose A, Fleming D. Sexual behaviors in an urban bathhouse 15 years into the HIV epidemic. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*. 2002; 30:522–526. [PubMed: 12154343]
- Watters JK, Biernacki P. Targeted sampling: Options for the study of hidden populations. *Social Problems*. 1989; 36:416–430.

- Weatherburn, P.; Hickson, F.; Reid, D. Net benefits: Gay men's use of the internet and other settings where HIV prevention occurs. Sigma Research; London: 2003. Retrieved May 20, 2009, from <http://www.sigmaresearch.org.uk/go.php/reports/report2003b/>
- Weatherburn P, Hickson F, Reid DS, Davies PM, Crosier A. Sexual HIV risk behavior among men who have sex with both men and women. *AIDS Care*. 1998; 10:463–471. [PubMed: 9828966]
- Weiss, RS. Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies. Free Press; New York: 1994.
- Wheeler DP. Exploring HIV prevention needs for nongay-identified black and African American men who have sex with men: A qualitative exploration. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. 2006; 33:1–6.
- Wiederman MW, LaMar L. “Not with him you don’t!”: Gender and emotional reactions to sexual infidelity during courtship. *Journal of Sex Research*. 1998; 35:228–297.
- Williams JK, Wyatt GE, Resell J, Peterson J, Asuan-O’Brien A. Psychosocial issues among gay- and non-gay-identifying HIV-seropositive African American and Latino men. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*. 2004; 10:268–286. [PubMed: 15311979]
- Wolitski RJ, Jones KT, Wasserman JL, Smith JC. Self-identification as “down low” among men who have sex with men (MSM) from 12 US cities. *AIDS and Behavior*. 2006; 10:519–529. [PubMed: 16691462]
- Woods WJ, Binson D, Blair J, Han L, Spielberg F, Pollack LM. Probability sample estimates of bathhouse sexual risk behavior. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*. 2007; 45:231–238. [PubMed: 17417103]

Table 1
Sample Demographic Characteristics (N = 46)

	%	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age (in years)			39.6	11.0
20 – 29	24%	11		
30 – 39	20%	9		
40 – 49	41%	19		
50 – 60	15%	7		
Race/Ethnicity				
African American/Black	41%	19		
Hispanic/Latino	35%	16		
Non-Hispanic White	22%	10		
Asian	2%	1		
Education				
Less than High School	15%	7		
High School or GED	33%	15		
Some College	22%	10		
College graduate or more	31%	14		
Personal Income (yearly)				
Under \$20,000	37%	17		
\$20,000 - \$39,000	43%	20		
\$40,000 or more	20%	9		
Relationship Status				
Married or Common Law Marriage	22%	10		
Current Steady Girlfriend	59%	27		
Steady Girlfriend in Past Year	20%	9		
Regular Male Sex Partner/Buddy	57%	26		
Private Sexual Identity ^a				
Heterosexual or Straight	22%	10		
Bisexual	63%	29		
Something else ^b	15%	7		
HIV Status				
HIV Negative	74%	34		
HIV Positive	20%	9		
Never tested	7%	3		

^a Assessed as “not how you label your behavior, but rather how you think of yourself”.

^b Other non-gay identities included “heteroflexible”, “curious”, “sexually free”, “exploring”, and refusing to label oneself.

Table 2
Frequencies of Venues Where MSMW Met their Male Sex Partners

Venue	Past Year	Past 3 Months
Bar or club	39%	28%
Cruising park/public restroom	24%	21%
Internet	33%	28%
Bathhouse	0%	0%
Video booth/adult movie theater	4%	3%
Gym	13%	13%
Through friends, at work, or in the neighborhood	na	38%
Other places ^I	15%	8%

Notes: na = not assessed; this source of male partners was not assessed as part of the past year assessment, only in the past 3 months assessment.

^I Other places included a bus terminal, subway, parade, telephone chat line, street party, airport, pool, and sex party.