Sexual Violence Facilitated by Dating Apps:

The Experiences of Men Who Have Sex with Men

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April 2021

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies.

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Abstract

This dissertation highlighted and addressed the nature and extent of sexual violence against men who have sex with men (MSM) that is facilitated through their use of dating apps. The dissertation includes three manuscripts, each of which details a unique study. The first study investigated MSM dating app users' conceptualizations and negotiations of sexual consent. Findings revealed that MSM identify consent frameworks but do not always apply those frameworks, or apply their interpretations of those frameworks, to their online and in-person sexual interactions with other MSM dating users. The second study examined MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics. Findings uncovered a diversity in MSM's experiences that are reflected along three "dimensions": wanted/unwanted, consensual/non-consensual, and typical/atypical. Findings also revealed seven factors that impact MSM's experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics. The third study investigated manifestation of rape culture that are facilitated through MSM's use of dating apps. Findings showed that unwanted sexual messages and images are common manifestations of rape culture on dating apps. Findings also demonstrated that rape culture extends from online interactions to in-person interactions. Several MSM disclosed sexual violence they experienced through their use of dating apps, and one admitted to perpetrating sexual violence. This dissertation reveals the ways in which MSM experience and perpetrate sexual violence through their use of dating apps, as well as the ways in which dating apps facilitate sexual violence. Recommendations for education, community work, law and policy, and dating app software development are offered, along with limitations and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: MSM, sexual violence, sexual consent, dick pics, rape culture, dating apps

Résumé

Cette thèse a mis en évidence et abordé la nature et l'étendue de la violence sexuelle contre les hommes ayant des rapports sexuels avec des hommes (HARSAH) qui est facilitée par leur utilisation des applications de rencontres. La thèse est composée de trois manuscrits, chacun détaillant une étude unique. La première étude a examiné les conceptualisations et les négociations des utilisateurs d'applications de rencontres sur le consentement sexuel. Les résultats ont révélé que les HARSAH identifient les cadres de consentement mais n'appliquent pas toujours ces cadres, ou appliquent leurs interprétations de ces cadres, à leurs interactions sexuelles en ligne et en personne avec d'autres HARSAH. La deuxième étude a examiné les expériences des utilisateurs d'applications de rencontres en matière d'envoi et de réception de photos de pénis non sollicitées. Les résultats ont révélé une diversité dans les expériences des HARSAH qui se reflètent selon trois « dimensions » : désiré / non désiré, consensuelle / non consensuelle, et typique / atypique. Les résultats ont également révélé sept facteurs qui ont un impact sur les expériences des HARSAH d'envoi et de réception de photos de pénis non sollicitées. La troisième étude a examiné les manifestations de la culture du viol qui sont facilitées par l'utilisation des applications de rencontres par les HARSAH. Les résultats ont montré que les messages et images sexuels non désirés sont des manifestations courantes de la culture du viol sur les applications de rencontres. Les résultats ont également démontré que la culture du viol s'étend des interactions en ligne aux interactions en personne. Plusieurs HARSAH ont révélé des violences sexuelles qu'ils avaient subies en utilisant des applications de rencontres, et un a admis avoir commis des violences sexuelles. Cette thèse a révélé les façons dont les HARSAH vivent et perpétuent la violence sexuelle à travers leur utilisation des applications de rencontres, ainsi que les façons dont les applications de rencontres facilitent la violence sexuelle. Des recommandations en matière d'éducation, de travail communautaire, de droit et de politique,

et de développement de logiciels sont proposées, ainsi que des limites et des suggestions pour de futures recherches.

for over two years. Together, we talked about my research, analyzed preliminary data, and did exercises in summarizing preliminary findings. Our conversations and exercises in data analysis and writing undoubtedly contributed to my understanding of the findings that I present in this dissertation. I thank them for their involvement and for all that they taught me.

The manuscript entitled, *"That's Straight-Up Rape Culture": Manifestations of Rape Culture on Grindr* (see Chapter 6), is being publishing in an edited book collection, *The Emerald International Handbook of Technology-facilitated Violence and Abuse*, in 2021. I would like to thank the editors of the book, Dr. Jane Bailey, Dr. Asher Flynn, and Dr. Nicola Henry, for granting me the opportunity to publish with them. Specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Henry as she worked with me to revise my sole-authored manuscript. I learned so much from working with Dr. Henry and I am grateful for her scholarly mentorship and support.

There are three other experiences that I had during my PhD that significantly impacted my scholarship. First, I worked with Dr. Viviane Namaste and several other colleagues at Concordia University to research sexual misconduct among men who have sex with men at universities. Second, I received a Mitacs Research Fellowship and worked with Dr. Kath Albury and colleagues for six months in Australia on a project that examined transgender and gender diverse people's experiences with dating apps. Third, in the months following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I worked with Dr. Stefanie Duguay and Dr. David Myles to research dating app companies' responses to the pandemic. These three opportunities helped me diversify my knowledge of research methods and develop a broader yet deeper field of scholarship. I am also proud to say that these three projects yielded academic and non-academic publications.

Throughout my degree, I worked at Campus Life & Engagement (CL&E), a student services office at McGill University. My portfolio included leadership development opportunities for undergraduate students and the education and training of students involved in orientation

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin this dissertation by explaining how I chose the topic of my doctoral research. In 2016, I was doing a master's degree and working as a research assistant on the IMPACTS Project, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Grant at McGill University, that aims "to address sexual violence in all its physical and virtual forms in university contexts" (IMPACTS, 2021). In my work as a research assistant, I studied sexual violence against people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual or gender minority identities (LGBTQ+). I realized that the sexual violence literature often overlooked the ways in which LGBTQ+ people connect nowadays, notably, via technology and through dating apps. In recognizing this gap in the literature, I decided to investigate sexual violence related to people's use of dating apps, particularly among LGBTQ+ people and men who have sex with men (MSM).

Overview of Dissertation

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to contribute to new knowledge by illuminating and addressing the nature and extent of sexual violence against MSM that is facilitated through their use of dating apps. To achieve this goal, I identified five specific research objectives.

Objective 1

The first objective of this dissertation was to conduct an overview and assess what is known about the online and in-person forms of sexual violence that MSM experience through their use of dating apps. Chapter 2 achieves this objective through a literature review of scholarly research in the following four areas:

1. Sexual violence and technology-facilitated sexual violence.

2. Discourses on sexual consent and consent practices specific to MSM and their use of dating apps.

3. Unsolicited dick pics, and the related fields of online sexual harassment and sexting.

4. Rape culture, including definitions of rape culture and manifestations of rape culture.

Throughout my literature review in Chapter 2, I highlight gaps to explain how the experiences of MSM have been overlooked. In Chapter 3, I discuss phenomenology and, more specifically, my research method of interpretive phenomenology. I also explain my epistemology, research procedures, and data analysis. As such, Chapter 3 provides scholarship on the research approaches I used and their relevance to my doctoral research.

Objective 2

The second objective of this dissertation was to engage in a study on sexual consent practices among MSM dating app users. This objective was achieved through Study 1, which included semi-structured interviews with 25 self-identified MSM dating app users (i.e., "the MSM Interviews"). The MSM Interviews were conducted in Autumn 2017 in Montreal, Canada. The data collected from the MSM Interviews are the same data analyzed in Study 2 and Study 3, which are explained below (see also Chapter 3).

In Study 1, I employed phenomenology to examine the ways in which MSM communicate and negotiate consent, primarily on dating apps. I also explored differences in how MSM conceptualize consent and how MSM enact consent, including in their interactions on dating apps and their interactions in person. Study 1 is detailed in my sole-authored manuscript, which is included in this dissertation as Chapter 4. The manuscript is entitled, *"I think that's as close as it gets to consent": Men who have sex with men's conceptualizations and negotiations of sexual consent on dating apps and in person.*

Objective 3

The third objective of this dissertation was to engage in a study on unsolicited "dick pics" sent and received by MSM dating app users. (An unsolicited dick pic is the colloquial term for a photo of a penis that is sent without the consent of the recipient.) I investigated the phenomenon of unsolicited dick pics in Study 2 through an analysis of the MSM Interviews. Specifically, I used phenomenology to investigate MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics and, in examining this phenomenon, I explored the ways in which MSM trivialize and minimize technology-facilitated sexual violence. Study 2 is detailed in my sole-authored manuscript in Chapter 5 entitled, *The three dimensions of unsolicited dick pics: MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics.*

Objective 4

The fourth objective of this dissertation was to uncover how rape culture manifests through the experiences of MSM who use dating apps. In Study 3, I sought to gain knowledge about manifestations of rape culture on dating apps, again through an analysis of the MSM Interviews. I conducted a thematic analysis of interview data to examine how MSM understand and experience rape culture through their use of dating apps. Study 3 is detailed in Chapter 6 through my sole-authored manuscript, *"That's straight-up rape culture": Manifestations of rape culture on Grindr.*

Objective 5

The final objective of this dissertation was to analyze, interpret, and synthesize the findings from Studies 1–3. To do so, I examined key findings from Studies 1–3 in Chapters 4–6 and considered them within the broader context of the literature review from Chapter 2. Thus, in Chapter 7, I discuss the relevance and implications of my findings, and explain the ways in which

I have applied and disseminated my findings, notably through education and community work. Chapter 8 explains the limitations of my research, delineates recommendations and future directions, and concludes my dissertation. Objective 5 is achieved through Chapters 7 and 8.

Background and Context

Smartphone-based dating applications, colloquially referred to as "dating apps", have become a major component of contemporary dating culture since they launched in the late 2000s and early 2010s. Dating apps rely on geolocation and display different users based on the user's physical location, which means that a user can unlock potential matches when they move around a city or travel domestically and internationally (White Hughto, Pachankis, Eldahan, & Keene, 2016). In addition to the ease and mobility of connecting to dating markets via a smartphone, there are many reasons why people use dating apps, including to chat, make friends, and relieve boredom (Albury et al., 2019). It is estimated that about 2.4 million people in Canada used online dating in 2019 and that 3 million people will use online dating by 2024 (Blumtritt, 2020).

Dating apps are particularly popular among LGBTQ+ people. In fact, the first dating apps were developed by and for MSM (Myles, Duguay, & Dietzel, 2021). Grindr, which launched in 2009 and is the most popular dating app among MSM (Badal, Stryker, DeLuca, & Purcell, 2017), recently reported that about 13 million people use the app each month (Grindr, 2020). Grindr and other dating apps are popular among MSM because, in addition to the reasons listed above (Albury et al., 2019), dating apps allow MSM to explore their sexual identities, control when and how they connect with others, and pursue intimate, romantic, and sexual interactions online and in person (Pingel, Bauermeister, Johns, Eisenberg, & Leslie-Santana, 2013; Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014).

Despite the popularity of dating apps among MSM, research in the field remains limited. Much of the research on MSM dating apps has focused on sexual health and the potential

transmission of HIV and STIs (Albury & Byron, 2016; Albury et al., 2019). However, in a study examining LGBTQ+ dating app users' perceptions of risk, Albury and Byron (2016) found that participants framed risk not in reference to their sexual health, but around concerns of unwanted sexual contact, sexual harassment, and sexual predators. Other studies have similarly found that MSM who use dating apps are concerned about physical harm, sexual harassment, and rape (Corriero & Tong, 2016; Bauermeister et al., 2010). Concerns about sexual violence against MSM dating app users are not unfounded; about one in ten MSM dating app users has experienced sexual violence in their lifetime (Duncan et al., 2018). While I conduct a broader and deeper review of research on sexual violence and dating apps in Chapter 2, I cite these studies to emphasize the gaps in the literature and call attention to MSM dating app users' concerns about sexual violence.

Sexual violence is an umbrella term for a spectrum of non-consensual sexual activity and behaviours that includes sexual coercion, sexual assault, and rape (Kelly, 1988; Peterson, Buday, & McCallum, 2015). Research has consistently shown that MSM face higher risks of sexual violence than heterosexual men (Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013; Chen, Walters, Gilbert, & Patel, 2020). In Canada, the percentage of MSM who experienced sexual assault is about 3.5 times higher than the percentage of heterosexual men (Jaffray, 2020). A meta-analysis of 75 studies on sexual assault against sexual minority men and women found the median estimate of sexual assault among MSM to be around 30% – but noted that the rate could be as high as 54% (Rothman, Exner, & Baughman, 2011). Recent data from Statistics Canada similarly suggests that about one in four MSM experience sexual assault in their lifetime (Jaffray, 2020).

Sexual violence is not limited to in-person assaults. It can also happen online, and includes incidents like cyber-sexual harassment, cyberstalking, and image-based sexual abuse (Henry & Powell, 2014). Waldman (2019) found that MSM dating app users are more than twice

as likely as the general population to experience image-based sexual abuse, while Powell, Scott, Flynn, and Henry (2020) found that over half of MSM have experienced online sexual violence. These numbers align with data from Statistics Canada, which show that MSM are about two and a half times more likely to experience unwanted sexual behaviour online than heterosexual men (Jaffray, 2020). Statistics Canada also reports that about one in three MSM has experienced unwanted sexual behaviour online in the past twelve months (Jaffray, 2020).

Although MSM may experience sexual violence in person and online, few studies have explored sexual violence related to dating app use, and much of the related research focuses on heterosexual relationships and the experiences of heterosexual women (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2019; Gillett, 2018; Couch, Liamputtong, & Pitts, 2012). There has been related research in the fields of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Henry & Powell, 2018); online sexual harassment, such as non-consensual sexting (Krieger, 2017; Klettke, Hallford, & Mellor, 2014) and unsolicited dick pics (Waling & Pym, 2017); and rape culture on social media (Rentschler, 2014) – yet the focus remains on heterosexual women. Emerging research has begun to explore LGBTQ+ dating app users' experiences of sexual violence (Albury, Dietzel, et al., 2020; Albury et al., 2019), though the number of studies remained limited. My dissertation aims to address these gaps by investigating sexual violence MSM that experience through their use of dating apps.

Note about the Acronyms MSM and LGBTQ+

MSM is an acronym for men who have sex with men. The acronym MSM is commonly used in research on sexualities and sexual health (e.g., Albury et al., 2019). Some studies (e.g., Namaste et al., 2020) have referred to this population as "sexual minority men", though I prefer to use the acronym MSM to be inclusive all men's sexual identities, especially since not all MSM identify as sexual minorities, like gay or bisexual (Grov et al., 2014).

Historically, the MSM acronym has implied that the men participating in the research are all cisgender (i.e., a person's gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth). As such, the experiences of transgender men who have sex with men have not always been captured – or even acknowledged – in studies on MSM (Albury, Dietzel, et al., 2020). Thus, another reason why I use the acronym MSM is to emphasize men's sexual habits, rather than their identity. All of the MSM who participated in my research identified as cisgender.

Since the 1990s, the acronym LGBT has been used to refer to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. In recent years, there has been a push to expand the acronym to be more inclusive and reflect a growing diversity of sexual and gender identities. One such acronym is LGBTQ, with the "Q" serving as an umbrella letter for people who are queer (i.e., their sexual and/or gender identities are not heterosexual or cisgender). However, there are people who are impacted by LGBTQ issues who do not identify as a part of the LGBTQ community, including some MSM. Thus, for this dissertation, I have added a plus sign to the LGBTQ acronym (i.e., LGBTQ+) to emphasize the diversity in people's sexual and gender identities and to reference the various communities of people impacted by this work.

Note about the Term "Dating Apps"

There are a variety of terms that are employed to refer to Grindr, Tinder, Scruff, and other similar apps used by MSM. On their websites, Grindr is described as a "social networking app" (Grindr, 2021a) while Tinder is described as a "dating app" (Tinder, 2021). On its website, Scruff is simply described as an "app" that MSM use to connect (Scruff, XXXX).

Researchers who study these MSM apps commonly refer to them "dating apps" or "hookup apps" (e.g., Albury & Byron, 2016; Duguay, Burgess, & Light, 2017). However, researchers have also referred to them as "socio-sexual networking technologies" (White Hughto et al., 2016), "location-based social apps" (Fitzpatrick & Birnholtz, 2018), "geosocial networking

smartphone applications" (Hahn et al., 2018), and "people-nearby applications" (Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014), to name a few.

In my own work (e.g., Albury et al., 2019; Albury, Dietzel, et al., 2020; Myles, Duguay, & Dietzel, 2021), I use the term "dating apps" because it broadly captures the social, intimate, and sexual relations that MSM can engage in online and in person. Similarly, I prefer the term "dating apps" to "hookup apps" because "hookup" gives a sexual and casual connotation that does not always reflect the variety of reasons why MSM use these apps (White Hughto et al., 2016; Albury et al., 2019). Thus, for this dissertation, I employ the term "dating apps" to refer to Grindr, Tinder, Scruff, and other similar apps that MSM use to connect online and in person.

Rationale for Dissertation as a Manuscript-Based Thesis

I chose to present my dissertation as a manuscript-based thesis because of my goal to disseminate and apply my research in a meaningful, accessible, and timely manner. A manuscript-based thesis includes elements of a traditional thesis, such as a literature review and a discussion section. A manuscript-based thesis also includes manuscripts that have been, or will be, published – as well as bridging statements that connect the individual manuscripts. Because of this, there is some repetition between the chapters and the manuscripts.

Of my three sole-authored manuscripts, one is at press and one has been accepted to a journal. The Chapter 6 manuscript will be published in April 2021 as a chapter in *The Emerald International Handbook of Technology-facilitated Violence and Abuse*, which is an edited book collection from Dr. Jane Bailey, Dr. Asher Flynn, and Dr. Nicola Henry. The Chapter 5 manuscript was accepted to *Sexuality & Culture*, a peer-reviewed journal, in February 2021. I intend to submit the Chapter 4 manuscript to another peer-reviewed journal in the near future.

Timeliness of Dissemination to Address Emerging Movements

In the past few years, we have seen social movements like #MeToo give renewed attention to sexual violence and the systems that condone and perpetuate such violence. Social media companies have struggled to deal with concerns about harm and violence that are facilitated through their platforms. Dating app companies like Grindr have responded to concerns about safety and consent by offering safety tips (Grindr, 2021b), adding new features to their software (Grindr, 2021c), and giving information about how to obtain and provide consent (Grindr, 2021d). With the COVID-19 pandemic in its second year, society has become increasingly reliant on technology like dating apps to connect with other people. In fact, the pandemic has contributed to an increase in the number of dating app users (Meisenzahl, 2020) and the amount of time people spend on dating apps (OkCupid, 2020). Accordingly, it was important for me to begin publishing my doctoral research in order to address important gaps, disseminate new knowledge, and draw attention to the nuances, nature, and prevalence of sexual violence MSM experience through their use of dating apps.

Contribution of My Doctoral Research to New Knowledge

My doctoral research has implications on how people connect and manage their safety, and findings from my research can be applied to education, community work, policy development, and software development. In fact, I have already begun to apply my findings to address sexual violence. I have applied my findings to training programs and shared my findings with undergraduate students to teach them about consent and sexual violence. My findings have been used to inform a provincial campaign on consent among MSM dating app users and to educate pre-service teachers about rape culture. I explain the ways in which I have disseminated

my research in Chapter 7 and I give recommendations in Chapter 8, though I mention these examples to emphasize the timeliness of my work and its applicability to a variety of domains.

Summary

In this introductory chapter, I explained the overarching goal of my dissertation, namely, to highlight and address the nature and extent of sexual violence against MSM that is facilitated through their use of dating apps. I also explained the five objectives that provide the framework for the chapters in this dissertation, which also informed my research and analysis. Objective 1 is to provide an overview of online and in-person forms of sexual violence related to MSM's use of dating apps. Objectives 2, 3, and 4 are to specifically engage in three studies: the first on sexual consent, the second on unsolicited dick pics, and the third on manifestations of rape culture. Objective 5 is to analyze, interpret, and synthesize the findings from my doctoral research.

I address Objective 1 through a literature review, which I present in the next chapter, Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I detail my research method, outline my research procedures, and explain how I conducted my data analysis. Objectives 2, 3, and 4 were met through engagement of three qualitative studies, each of which is detailed in the manuscripts presented in Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6, respectively. Objective 5, which includes analysis, implications, recommendations, and limitations, is met through Chapters 7 and 8. Specifically, in Chapter 7, I analyze the key findings from my three studies and discuss the applications and implications of my findings. In Chapter 8, I describe the limitations of my research; offer recommendations for education, law and policy, and technology; and suggest directions for future research.

This introduction provided background information about MSM dating apps. I noted that there is a gap in the literature on MSM dating apps, specifically related to sexual consent and sexual violence. I defined the term "sexual violence" and explained the acronyms MSM and

LGBTQ+. Lastly, I outlined the structure and rationale for this dissertation, which is presented as a manuscript-based thesis.

In the next chapter, I review literature from the fields of sexual violence, technology-facilitated sexual violence, unsolicited dick pics, sexual consent, and rape culture. I also identify the gaps in the literature and explain how this dissertation addresses those gaps.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW[1]

This dissertation investigates sexual violence in the experiences of men who have sex with men (MSM) who use dating apps. In this chapter, I review the studies that provide the background for my research and, in doing so, I note the gaps in the literature. Chapter 2 addresses Objective 1 of this dissertation.

I begin this chapter by defining and discussing sexual violence, including the rates and impacts of sexual violence against MSM. Shifting the focus to technology, I discuss technology-facilitated sexual violence (Henry & Powell, 2014), give examples of technology-facilitated sexual violence, and consider the rates and impacts of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Next, I examine the phenomenon of unsolicited dick pics, a common form of image-based sexual abuse. Given that research on unsolicited dick pics is an emerging field of study (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018), I draw from literature on online sexual harassment and sexting. This section closes with information about MSM's experiences of receiving unsolicited dick pics and their experiences of sending unsolicited dick pics.

The following section focuses on sexual consent literature. I explain how consent has been conceptualized and describe the ways in which people communicate consent. I then discuss sexual consent practices among MSM, including negotiations and expressions of consent specific to MSM. I also examine how MSM communicate and enact consent online.

My literature review closes with an examination of rape culture. Though I reference Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth's (1993) definition, I discuss the limitations of their definition and

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[1] This literature review will be published in the edited collection, *IMPACTS: Reclaiming the Role of Universities to Address Sexual Violence through Multi-Sector Partnerships in Law, Arts, and Social Media*. The book is co-edited by Dr. Shaheen Shariff and myself, published through the University of Toronto Press, and features research on sexual violence from the IMPACTS Project (2021). Please note that this literature review (i.e., Chapter 2) may differ from the final publication.

similar definitions, notably, in relation to the experiences of LGBTQ+ people and MSM. For this dissertation, I adopt Shariff's (2017) definition of rape culture, which I present and discuss. Next, I explain how rape culture manifests at different levels of society and how it manifests online. I close by connecting the concept of rape culture to MSM's experiences.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is an umbrella term for a spectrum of non-consensual sexual activity and behaviors that ranges from harassment, threats, and sexual coercion to more serious and violent acts like sexual assault and rape (Kelly, 1988; Peterson, Buday, & McCallum, 2015). Research has consistently shown that MSM face higher risks of sexual violence than heterosexual men (Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013; Chen, Walters, Gilbert, & Patel, 2020). In Canada, the percentage of MSM who experience sexual assault is about 3.5 times higher than the percentage of heterosexual men (Jaffray, 2020). A meta-analysis of 75 studies on sexual assault against sexual minority men and women placed the median estimate of sexual assault among MSM around 30%, though the authors noted that it could be as high as 54% (Rothman, Exner, & Baughman, 2011). Recent data from Statistics Canada suggests that about one in four MSM experience sexual assault in their lifetime (Jaffray, 2020).

The rates of sexual violence are not uniform across populations. Studies have shown that racialized people face higher rates of sexual violence than white people. Rennison and Welchans (2000) reported that Black males experience intimate partner violence at a rate between two and three times higher than the rates against men of other races. Other research has found that the rates of lifetime sexual violence are highest among multiracial men, Hispanic men, and Black men (Black et al., 2011).

Sexual violence can have serious negative effects on the health and wellbeing of MSM. Research has shown that male survivors of male sexual assault suffer from internalized homophobia and post-traumatic stress (Gold & Marx, 2007) and hatred toward sex and sexual relationships (Walker, Rowe, & Quinsey, 1993). Other research has shown that MSM experience long-term crises with their sexual identity (Walker, Archer, & Davies, 2005a), social dysfunction, anxiety, depression, lower self-worth, and, in extreme cases, suicide (Walker, Archer, & Davies, 2005b).

Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is not limited to in-person assaults. Sexual violence can also happen online and includes incidents like cyber-sexual harassment, cyberstalking, and image-based sexual abuse (Henry & Powell, 2014). The term technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) refers to the ways in which technology is "used to facilitate both virtual and face-to-face sexually based harms" (Henry & Powell, 2018, p. 195). TFSV includes a range of behaviors, including image-based sexual abuse, psychological violence, and coercion (Henry & Powell, 2014).

Another form of TFSV is online sexual harassment. Online sexual harassment is defined as sexual behaviors that are unwanted or unwelcome (Biber, Doverspike, Baznik, Cober, & Ritter, 2002; Ritter, 2014; Schenk, 2008), such as unwanted sexual attention and uninvited sexual advances (Van Royen, Vandebosch, & Poels, 2015). As I explain later in this chapter, unsolicited dick pics constitute a form of online sexual harassment (Powell & Henry, 2017).

TFSV is not limited to online spaces and interactions. TFSV also includes incidents of sexual violence that can arise through people's use of technology. Some examples of TFSV are using digital technologies to commit sexual violence in person and sharing the personal details of someone online in order to incite violence against them (Fairbairn, 2015; Powell & Henry, 2017).

Research has shown that MSM are concerned about TFSV. Research from Bauermeister and colleagues (2010) suggested that about one in two MSM are concerned about their physical safety when meeting another user in person. They also reported that more than one in ten MSM dating app users are concerned about experiencing forced sex or rape (Bauermeister, at al., 2010). Corriero and Tong (2016) similarly reported that MSM dating app users are concerned about sexual violence, including sexual harassment, physical assault, and rape. Albury and Byron (2016) asked same-sex dating app users about their concerns related to dating app use in order to assess the extent to which users' concerns aligned with the emphasis MSM dating app studies put on issues of sexual health. Albury and Byron (2016) found that participants were more concerned about sexual harassment, unwanted sexual contact, and other non-consensual sexual conduct than their sexual health. Recent research has shown that MSM experience TFSV through their use of dating apps. Waldman (2019) found that MSM dating app users experience sexual harassment and image-based sexual abuse, among other types of TFSV.

Image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) is a common form of TFSV. Sometimes referred to as "revenge porn", IBSA is defined as "the non-consensual creation of nude or sexual images, the non-consensual distribution of those intimate images, and the threat of distributing intimate images" (Powell, Henry, & Flynn, 2018, p. 306). There are many forms of IBSA, including voyeurism, sextortion, and the distribution of sexual assault images (Powell & Henry, 2017). As these examples of IBSA suggest, people may commit IBSA in pursuit of status, power, money, revenge, or personal pleasure (Powell et al., 2018).

MSM dating app users experience high rates of IBSA. In his U.S. study, Waldman (2019) found that MSM experience IBSA at a rate that is at least two times higher than the general population. In their Australian study, Powell, Scott, Flynn, and Henry (2020) found that over half of MSM have experienced IBSA. These numbers align with data from Statistics Canada, which

show that MSM are about two and a half times more likely to experience online sexual violence than heterosexual men (Jaffray, 2020). Statistics Canada also reported that about one in three MSM has experienced online sexual violence in the past twelve months (Jaffray, 2020).

Similar to in-person sexual violence, online sexual violence can result in physical and psychological harms (Henry & Powell, 2018; Thompson, 2018; Couch, Liamputtong, & Pitts, 2012). Online sexual violence can have detrimental effects on the safety, health, and wellbeing of an individual (Scarduzio, Sheff, & Smith, 2018), causing them emotional and physical harm (Fairbairn, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2018). Online sexual violence can also negatively impact people's jobs and relationships (Citron & Franks, 2014).

As I mentioned above, one form of TFSV is the use of digital technologies to perpetrate a sexual assault in person (Fairbairn, 2015; Powell & Henry, 2017). Rowse, Bolt, and Gaya (2020) examined the cases of sexual assaults from a one year-period (between February 2018 and March 2019) to explore the extent to which digital technologies were used to perpetuate sexual assault. They found that, of the 76 total cases, 11 of them (14%) were related to dating app use. The majority of those sexual assaults ($n = 9$, 82%) occurred the first time the dating app users met in person. Rowse, Bolt, and Gaya's (2020) study did not include MSM, though there are reports of men who have experienced sexual assault from someone they met via dating sites (e.g., National Crime Agency, 2016).

Research has recently begun to explore the role of dating apps in TFSV, yet much of this research focuses on the experiences of heterosexual women (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2019; Gillett, 2018; Couch, Liamputtong, & Pitts, 2012). Research from the related fields of non-consensual sexting (Krieger, 2017; Klettke, Hallford, & Mellor, 2014), unsolicited dick pics (Amundsen, 2020; Waling, Kerr, Bourne, Power, & Kehler, 2020), and rape culture on social media (Keller, Mendes, & Ringrose, 2018; Rentschler, 2014) has similarly focused on the

experiences of heterosexual women. Research from Dr. Kath Albury, myself, and colleagues (Albury, Dietzel, et al., 2020; Albury et al., 2019) has drawn attention to LGBTQ+ dating app users' experiences of sexual violence, though there is a lack of research on MSM dating app users' experiences of sexual violence. This dissertation addresses this gap by investigating the nature and extent to which MSM experience sexual violence through their use of dating apps.

Unsolicited Dick Pics

An unsolicited "dick pic" (DP) is the colloquial term for a photo of a penis that is sent without verifying that the recipient wants to receive it. Over the past several years, popular culture and mainstream media have described unsolicited DPs as a common phenomenon in contemporary online dating culture (Paasonen, Light, & Jarrett, 2019; Mandau, 2019; Waling & Pym, 2017). Unsolicited DPs have been indirectly studied within the fields of online sexual harassment and sexting (Waling & Pym, 2017; Waling et al., 2020), though unsolicited DPs is a more specific phenomenon than either online sexual harassment or sexting. This is one of the reasons why unsolicited DPs are emerging as a new field of study (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018).

Unsolicited Dick Pics versus Online Sexual Harassment

Unsolicited DPs are different from online sexual harassment in a few different ways. To better understand those differences, it is important to define online sexual harassment. According to Powell and Henry (2017), online sexual harassment is an "imprecise term" that includes a range of behaviors, such as unwanted sexual attention, hate speech, trolling, and cyberbullying (p. 156). Considering the broad range of behaviors, Powell and Henry (2017) divide online sexual harassment into four categories: sexual solicitation, image-based sexual harassment, gender-based hate speech, and rape threats. Although unsolicited DPs would fall under image-based sexual harassment, Powell and Henry (2017) argue that image-based sexual harassment is

still too broad of a category. As such, they divide image-based sexual harassment includes three categories of its own: unsolicited sexual images, photos, and videos (e.g., unsolicited dick pics); images that have been photoshopped or manipulated to victimize someone who has experienced sexual violence; and websites that denigrate and objectify women, girls, transgender people, and gender diverse people (Powell & Henry, 2017). Thus, for Powell and Henry (2017), unsolicited DPs are one specific form of a sub-subset of online sexual harassment.

In addition to unsolicited DPs being a more specific phenomenon than online sexual harassment, the two phenomena differ in how people experience them. Online sexual harassment has been described as primarily targeting women, girls, and people with gender minority identities (Powell & Henry, 2017; Vitis & Gilmour, 2017). People who experience online sexual harassment are bullied, abused, and victimized (Powell & Henry, 2017). Thus, online sexual harassment is a gendered phenomenon that is negatively positioned.

Unsolicited DPs have been recognized as a gendered phenomenon (Mandau, 2019), though not all people who receive unsolicited DPs describe having negative experiences. In their quantitative study of 2343 women's and MSM's experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs, Marcotte, Gesselman, Fisher, and Garcia (2020) found that women mainly reported negative experiences, with few reporting neutral or positive experiences. In contrast, MSM mainly reported positive experiences, with few reporting neutral or negative experiences (Marcotte et al., 2020). Marcotte et al.'s (2020) findings indicate that, unlike online sexual harassment, people have positive, negative, and neutral experiences with unsolicited DPs. Similarly, Paasonen, Light, and Jarrett (2019) asserted that DPs fail to be captured within "a framework of gendered victimization" (p. 4) and suggested that people's experiences with DPs may vary according to factors like gender, sexuality, and sociability (p. 2).

Unsolicited Dick Pics versus Sexting

Even though unsolicited DPs have been explored within research on sexting (Waling & Pym, 2017; Mandau, 2019), the phenomenon of unsolicited DPs is uniquely different from sexting. Sexting is a term that combines the words "sex" and "texting" to describe the practice of sending and receiving sexual images and messages via technology (Hertlein, Shadid, & Steelman, 2015; Bauermeister, Yeagley, Meanley, & Pingel, 2014). In contrast, the term "unsolicited dick pic" is defined by one specific sexual image and emphasizes the sending of that image (Marcotte et al., 2020).

There are other significant differences between unsolicited DPs and sexting. Sexting can be consensual or non-consensual (Krieger, 2017), though the lack of consent from a recipient is a critical part of the definition of unsolicited DPs (Mandau, 2019; Marcotte et al., 2020). Sexting research has tended to focus on teenagers and young adults (Dobson, 2017), giving it a youthful connotation (Albury & Crawford, 2012). Research on unsolicited DPs, however, has not been limited to a particular age group (Amundsen, 2020). Much of the research on sexting has examined interactions between heterosexual men and women (Klettke, Hallford, & Mellor, 2014). While there are some studies on sexting practices among MSM, they tend to focus on the potentially risky outcomes of sexting (Bauermeister et al., 2014; Rice et al., 2012). Unsolicited DPs, however, are considered a low-risk activity for men (Mandau, 2019; Oswald et al., 2019; Waling & Pym, 2017; Vitis & Gilmour, 2017).

MSM's Experiences of Receiving Unsolicited Dick Pics

As noted above, Marcotte and colleagues (2020) found that MSM's experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs differ greatly from those of women. Women who receive unsolicited DPs generally describe them as unpleasant, disrespectful, repulsive, harassing, abusive, and

violating (Salter, 2016; Waling & Pym, 2017; Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018; Mandau, 2019; Marcotte et al., 2020). MSM who receive unsolicited DPs generally describe them as arousing, flattering, and exciting (Marcotte et al., 2020; Tziallas, 2015). Not all MSM enjoy receiving unsolicited DPs, however. Marcotte and colleagues (2020) noted that some MSM are ambivalent about receiving them and some MSM do not like receiving them.

Other research suggests that MSM's feelings about receiving unsolicited DPs are not static; rather, their responses to unsolicited DPs may change depending on different factors. In their study on young MSM's experiences with online dating, Pingel and colleagues (2013) found that young MSM became desensitized to the sexual nature of MSM dating over time. Chan's (2018) study on intimacy among MSM revealed that the attractiveness of an MSM dating app user and their photos could make a difference in whether or not another MSM responded to the other user's advances. There were dating app users in Albury and Byron's (2016) study who said that unsolicited nude images were unwanted if they were received early in the day or at the beginning of a conversation. A few studies (e.g., Yeung et al., 2014; Dake et al., 2012; Benotsch et al., 2013) have shown that consuming alcohol or drugs reduces people's inhibitions and, subsequently, increases their willingness to send and receive sexual images. From these studies, it seems that several factors – age, experience with online dating, attractiveness, time of day, timing in a chat, and consumption of alcohol and/or drugs – may impact MSM's experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited DPs.

MSM's Motivations for Sending Unsolicited Dick Pics

Research has begun to examine men's motivations for sending unsolicited DPs. Paasonen, Light, and Jarrett (2019) asserted that one reason men send DPs is to get the recipient's attention. Another reason that men may send unsolicited DPs is because they hope the recipient will

reciprocate with sexual images of their own (Oswald et al., 2019). March and Wagstaff (2017) explained that men may send unsolicited DPs in an effort to pressure or coerce the recipient into engaging in sexual activity with them. Vitis and Gilmour (2017) asserted that men send unsolicited DPs as a demonstration of their power and in an attempt to harm the recipient. Hayes and Dragiewicz (2018) argued that men who send unsolicited DPs are exhibitionists who are excited by the idea of sending sexual images of themselves to other people. Mandau (2019) found that men sent unsolicited DPs to brag about their penis and as an attempt to impress or compliment the recipient. While these findings outline a range of motivations for sending unsolicited DPs, these studies largely focused on heterosexual men. It is unclear as to whether MSM have similar or different motivations for sending unsolicited DPs.

Unsolicited Dick Pics as an Emerging Field

Though unsolicited DPs is an emerging field of study (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018), there is limited research in this area and the majority of studies have emphasized heterosexual relationships (e.g., Amundsen, 2020). In fact, at the time of writing this dissertation, I only found four studies on unsolicited DPs that included MSM in their analysis (Paasonen, Light, & Jarrett, 2019; Powell, Henry, Flynn, & Scott, 2019; Oswald et al., 2019; Marcotte et al., 2020). None of these studies focused their research exclusively on LGBTQ+ populations. Despite this, scholars who researched unsolicited DPs have called for future studies to examine LGBTQ+ people's experiences and, more specifically, the experiences of MSM (e.g., Waling & Pym, 2017; Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018; Mandau, 2019). This dissertation addresses this gap through the Chapter 5 study on MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited DPs.

Sexual Consent

There are several conceptualizations of sexual consent present in the literature. First, consent has been conceptualized as the desire to engage in a sexual activity (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016). Since this conceptualization emphasizes a person's internal motivations and willingness, the person's desires are not directly observable by other people (Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999).

Second, consent has been framed as an agreement to do something (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). The agreement is a communication of a person's internal desire and willingness to engage in a sexual activity (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). This agreement can be communicated explicitly, such as through written or verbal statements, or less explicitly, such as through cues and signals (Muehlenhard et al., 2016).

Consent has also been conceptualized as a behavior that other people interpret as willingness to engage in a sexual activity (Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Beres, 2007). This notion of consent has been described as implied consent (Block, 2004) and inferred consent (Muehlenhard et al., 2016), depending on whether the emphasis is on the person signaling consent (i.e., implied) or the person interpreting consent (i.e., inferred). Consent as a behavior means that people rely on cues, signals, and context as they speculate and make assumptions about another person's consent (Muehlenhard et al., 2016).

Research has also shown that some people understand consent as a single, distinct act while other people think about consent as a continuous process (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Conceptualizing consent as a discrete event means that one action, such as saying "yes", secures a person's consent, which then continues for the duration of the sexual activity (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). In contrast, consent as a continuous practice means that negotiations of consent are ongoing throughout a sexual activity (Humphreys, 2004; Beres, 2014). Consent in this sense

means constantly assessing a partner's behavior for "active participation" (Beres, 2014, p. 8) to ensure they are still consenting. Practicing continuous consent also means that a person can stop consenting at any point (Harris, 2018).

Bauer (2014) asserted that consent negotiations imply a level of care for a sexual partner. According to Bauer (2014), people who negotiate consent engage in "an active, ongoing collaboration for the mutual benefit of all involved" that "leads to an ethics of heightened responsibility and accountability for the consequences of one's actions" (Bauer, 2014, p. 106). Thus, there are people who negotiate and practice continuous consent because they perceive of consent as a shared, collective responsibility (Barker, 2013).

Lastly, literature in the field has emphasized that consent needs to be freely given. The notion of consent being freely given has been framed around a person's ability to give their consent (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Consent that is freely given recognizes the desire a person has to engage in a sexual activity and emphasizes their sexual agency to do so, free from influence (Humphreys, 2004). Studies have noted a variety of factors that can limit a person's ability to consent, including coercion and intoxication (Gruber, 2016; Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Gersen & Suk, 2016). Although studies have argued that individuals cannot consent if they are incapacitated by alcohol or drugs (e.g., Eileraas, 2011), Muehlenhard and colleagues (2016) note that there is no consensus in the literature as to what level of intoxication disqualifies a person from being able to consent.

Communicating Sexual Consent

There are explicit and non-explicit ways to communicate consent. Consent can be explicitly communicated through verbal or written means (Block, 2004). The mantra "yes means yes" is a well-known mantra that encourages explicit communication of consent (Harris, 2018).

The affirmative consent model also promotes explicit and enthusiastic communication of consent (Gruber, 2016; Garcia & Vemuri, 2017). The affirmative consent model expects people to seek out and secure consent from their partners before engaging in sexual activity (Gruber, 2016). However, research has shown that people may avoid explicitly communicating consent. Some people feel that explicit communication of consent hinders spontaneity, reduces excitement, is less romantic, and ruins the mood (Humphreys, 2007). Similarly, some people feel that it is unnecessary to explicitly communicate consent (Beres, 2010; Jozkowski & Hunt, 2013).

People can communicate consent in less explicit ways. One approach is to communicate consent through verbal or non-verbal cues (Beres, 2007). Numerous studies have found that people use non-verbal cues more than verbal cues to communicate consent and to infer the consent of their partner (e.g., Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014; Beres, 2010, 2014; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Hall, 1998). Research has also shown that people signal consent by engaging in a sexual activity. Jozkowski, Sanders, and colleagues (2014) found that people who communicate consent through engagement would initiate sexual conduct and move forward with the sexual interaction if their partner reciprocated. Jozkowski, Sanders, and colleagues (2014) also found that people who signal consent by engaging in a sexual activity would keep going unless they were stopped by their partner.

People may communicate sexual consent differently depending on the sexual activity (Hall, 1998). For example, explicit communications of consent may be used more often in "risky" sexual interactions, like anal sex (McKie, 2015), and less often when kissing or caressing a partner (Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014; Humphreys 2007; Hall, 1998). People may also communicate consent differently with a new partner, preferring to be more explicit in their communications than they would be in a committed relationship (Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2007; Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Thus, explicit communications of consent are more

important when engaging in a sexual activity with a new partner for first the time (Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2007).

It is important to note that people may feel conflicted or unsure about engaging in a sexual activity (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2005). Some people may continue with a sexual activity, even when they feel ambivalent about it (Sweeney, 2014; Beres, Senn, & McCaw, 2014). This means that a person might express consent for a sexual activity even if they are not willing to engage in that activity. In these situations, an external communication of consent may be considered "performative" since it is incongruent with the person's internal desires (Muehlenhard et al., 2016).

MSM Sexual Consent Practices

Much of the literature on consent has focused on heterosexual sexual interactions. Many studies frame consent around traditional gender roles and normative sexual scripts in which one partner (i.e., the man) initiates and requests consent and the other (i.e., the woman) restricts and gives consent (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Beres et al., 2004). As such, the woman is often framed as the "gatekeeper" in heterosexual sexual interactions (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). However, in their examination of sexual scripts among 95 gay men and lesbian women, Klinkenberg and Rose (1994) found that in gay men's consent practices, there is no "gatekeeper" role similar to that of heterosexual women.

Despite the flexibility of roles, MSM confront consent-related challenges, including assumptions about their consent. Hollway's (1998) male sexual drive discourse asserts that men are perceived as always pursuing sex and, as such, a man's consent is always presumed. Men may feel pressured to be sexually active and to engage in sexual activity, even when they are

uninterested (Pascoe, 2005; Sweeney, 2014; Wiederman, 2005). MSM also have to reckon with the stereotype that gay men are promiscuous and consent to any sexual activity (Klesse, 2016).

MSM seem to prefer non-explicit communications of consent rather than explicit communications. Beres, Herold, and Maitland (2004) found that MSM use non-verbal cues more often than verbal cues, including when they initiate a sexual act and when they respond to their partner. More recent research from Beres, Senn, and McCaw (2014) showed that MSM may consent to a sexual activity by not doing anything or saying anything to stop the advances of their partner. Together, these studies suggest that MSM may perceive and structure consent around a lack of resistance from a sexual partner.

Research has also shown that MSM can signal consent for a sexual activity without explicitly discussing consent. For example, discussions about condom use and safe-sex practices can be understood as indicating consent (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). Other studies have found that MSM interacting online negotiate consent for an in-person sexual encounter through discussions of other topics, such as sexual positioning, the location of the sexual encounter, and the extent to which alcohol and drugs are involved (McKie, 2015; Albury et al., 2019).

As noted previously, MSM have concerns about experiencing sexual violence when meeting someone via online dating (Bauermeister et al., 2010; Corriero & Tong, 2016; Albury & Byron, 2016). This suggests that establishing consent is important to MSM who intend to meet someone from a dating app in person. Despite this, there is limited research on how MSM dating app users negotiate consent online. In fact, the only study I could find that specifically explored issues of consent related to MSM's use of dating apps was a master's thesis (McKie, 2015).

MSM Sexual Consent Online

For his thesis, McKie (2015) investigated MSM's negotiations of sexual consent. McKie (2015) found that MSM felt pressured to follow traditional sexual scripts, even though they expressed challenges in following such scripts. McKie (2015) also found that MSM discuss "a technology-specific script to initiate sexual contact" and they "often come to sexual agreements/arrangements before actually meeting the partner face-to-face" (p. 108). However, MSM in McKie's (2015) study felt as though they should always want sex. It was also uncomfortable for them to admit that they did not want to engage in a sexual activity. This led McKie (2015) to assert that "the sexual scripts for MSM are less clear, and as such, MSM are left to navigate their understanding of sexual consent from a perspective that does not always fit their sexual interactions" (p. 111). McKie (2015) also argued that technology complicates MSM's processes of negotiating and enacting consent.

While McKie's (2015) research examined MSM's online negotiations of consent, he tended to frame the online negotiations as a precursor to in-person interactions. Despite this, research has shown that MSM engage in sexual activity online (Albury et al., 2019; Race, 2015) and that MSM's online interactions may not result in meeting in person (Licoppe, Rivière, & Morel, 2015). This means that MSM may never engage in physical activities with some dating app users they chat with online. Many of MSM's online sexual interactions remain completely virtual. McKie's (2015) research offers insight into MSM's online negotiations of consent for in-person sexual encounters, though more research needs to be done to understand how MSM negotiate consent for sexual interactions that remain online.

There are some studies that may shed light on how MSM dating app users conceptualize and enact sexual consent online. In his research on MSM's chatroom practices, Jones (2005) found that MSM were intentional about the information they shared. MSM refrained from

sharing too much too quickly out of concerns that the MSM they interacted with would not share back (Jones, 2005). In his examination of online sexual communities, Race (2015) asserted that MSM take advantage of online affordances in pursuit of online sexual interactions that are liberated from the restrictions associated with in-person interactions. MSM may bypass traditional in-person etiquette, like salutations and small talk, in order to immediately and directly engage in sexual activity online (Race, 2015). Jones' (2005) findings suggest that MSM only feel comfortable engaging in sexual activity online after establishing a base level of trust with the other person. In contrast, Race's (2015) findings suggest that MSM feel sexually liberated online and, as such, they may forgo consent negotiations in favor of immediate sexual interactions.

Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz's (2018) research brings together findings from Jones' (2005) study and Race's (2015) study. Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz (2018) asserted that MSM dating app users experience tension as they consider how much information to share and when to share it in their interactions with other MSM. Sharing too much too fast may be inappropriate, but not sharing enough may not keep the other person engaged (Fitzpatrick & Birnholtz, 2018). They concluded that MSM are constantly trying to address that tension and assess the parameters of their online interactions with other MSM (Fitzpatrick & Birnholtz, 2018).

The lack of information about MSM's negotiations of consent, particularly in regard to their online interactions, constitutes a gap in the literature. This dissertation addresses this gap through the Chapter 4 study that examines how MSM conceptualize, communicate, negotiate, and enact consent with other MSM dating app users online and in person.

Rape Culture

In their book, *Transforming A Rape Culture*, Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth (1993) defined rape culture as:

a complex set of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture, women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm. (p. vii)

While Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth's (1993) definition is one of the most-cited definitions, rape culture has also been defined as "the social, cultural and structural discourses and practices in which sexual violence is tolerated, accepted, eroticised, minimised and trivialised" (Henry & Powell, 2014, p. 2). Many other scholars have defined rape culture and identified key tenets of the concept, which include excusing perpetrators of sexual violence and blaming victims for the violence committed against them (Phipps, Ringrose, Renold, & Jackson, 2018; Sills et al., 2016). Rape culture also includes blurred lines around consent and male sexual aggression, as well as interpersonal and systemic barriers that prevent people from reporting sexual violence (Phipps et al., 2018; Powell & Henry, 2014).

Another common point in scholars' definitions and descriptions of rape culture is that society condones and perpetuates sexual violence against women. While decades of research, public reports, and personal narratives have shown that heterosexual women are often targets of sexual violence (e.g., Brownmiller, 1975; Kelly, 1988; Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993; Henry & Powell, 2014), people of other genders and sexualities are also targets of sexual violence. About three in ten MSM and about four in ten women who have sex with women experience sexual assault in their lifetime (Rothman et al., 2011). These rates are even higher for trans and gender diverse people. Research has shown that at least half of trans people report unwanted sexual activity (Garofalo et al., 2006; Stotzer, 2009) and more than one in four trans people has experienced sexual violence (Turell, 2000).

Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth's (1993) conceptualization of rape culture does not take into consideration the sexual violence that LGBTQ+ people experience. Their definition, like many others (e.g., Phipps et al., 2018), presents a heteronormative idea of rape culture. These definitions suggest that LGBTQ+ people are implicated in rape culture without being affected by it. However, the idea of rape culture can be adapted to include LGBTQ+ people by removing the restriction on gender and sexuality, and by recognizing that there are societal systems and beliefs that condone and perpetuate sexual violence against LGBTQ+ people.

The goal of this dissertation is to investigate the nature and extent to which MSM experience sexual violence through their use of dating apps. Therefore, it is not within the scope of this dissertation to develop a definition of rape culture specific to the experiences of LGBTQ+ people or MSM. Instead, I adopt Shariff's (2017, p. 56) definition of rape culture: "the way in which sexist societal attitudes and language tacitly condone, minimize and/or normalize sexual violence, mostly against women, but also against other genders through institutions, communities and individuals."

Manifestations of Rape Culture in Society

Shariff's (2017) definition of rape culture notes that a rape culture is present at different levels of society: the institutional level, the community level, and the individual level. At the institutional level, rape culture manifests in the form of social structures that perpetuate sexual violence and barriers to reporting sexual violence (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993; Burt, 1980; Henry & Powell, 2014). These institutions also excuse perpetrators of sexual violence and fail to offer adequate resources for people who experience sexual violence (Buchwald et al., 1993; Burt, 1980; Henry & Powell, 2014). Rape culture is present in institutions across society,

including in law, medicine, education, and the media (Dietzel, 2019; Phillips, 2016; Shariff, Dietzel, & Jaswal, 2017).

Rape culture also exists at the community level and the individual level (Shariff, 2017). Manifestations of rape culture at these levels include, for example, failing to believe people who disclose an experience of sexual violence, blaming people for the sexual violence they experience, and making jokes about sexual assault and rape (Henry & Powell, 2014). Manifestations at all three levels interact and create overlapping barriers and systems of oppression, especially for people with marginalized identities (Crenshaw, 1991). The different manifestations of rape culture are indicative of socio-cultural beliefs and societal systems that trivialize, condone, and perpetuate sexual violence (Shariff, 2017; Henry & Powell, 2014; Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993).

Manifestations of Rape Culture through Technology

Rape culture also manifests online and through technology. Rape culture is present on social media and websites (Rentschler, 2014; Keller, Mendes, & Ringrose, 2018) as well as in video games and pornography (Ezzell, 2009; Makin & Morczek, 2015). In some cases, technology reproduces rape culture online much like it would in person. People engage in online spaces where they blame victims, excuse perpetrators, and trivialize sexual violence (Phipps et al., 2018; Stubbs-Richardson, Rader, & Cosby, 2018). In other cases, technology creates new problems that did not previously exist. For example, Shariff and DeMartini (2015) noted that offensive and degrading images can be quickly and easily shared via technology, and that it is difficult to remove those images once they are online. Other examples include simulated sexual violence, also known as "virtual rape", and the use of dating apps to organize and commit sexual assault (Powell & Henry, 2017; Fairbairn, 2015).

Much of the research on rape culture, including rape culture that manifests online, focuses almost exclusively on the experiences of heterosexual women and girls (e.g., Henry & Powell, 2014; Keller et al., 2018). Additionally, few studies examine how rape culture manifests through people's use of dating apps (Powell & Henry, 2017). This dissertation addresses this gap through the Chapter 6 study on manifestations of rape culture in MSM's experiences with dating apps. In the following two sections, I present research that helps contextualize and apply the concept of rape culture to MSM's experiences.

Rape Culture against MSM

Research suggests that rape culture targets MSM and women in similar ways. Like women, MSM can experience male sexual aggression; be exploited or coerced into engaging in sexual activity; be blamed for sexual violence they experience; and be dismissed when disclosing or reporting an incident of sexual violence (Braun, Schmidt, Gavey, Fenaughty, 2009; Davies, 2002; Gavey, 2005). MSM encounter rape myths and stereotypes that serve to minimize or erase their experiences of sexual violence (Mortimer, Powell, & Sandy, 2019; Klesse, 2016). Men are assumed to always be pursuing sexual activity and, consequently, people may presume a man's consent (Hollway, 1998; Klesse, 2016). MSM may feel pressured or expected to engage in sexual activity even if they do not want to (Gavey et al., 2009; Klesse, 2016). There are high rates of sexual violence against MSM (Rothman, Exner, & Baughman, 2011) and high rates of TFSV against MSM (Powell, Scott, Flynn, & Henry, 2020). MSM dating app users are concerned about experiencing sexual violence through their use of dating apps (Bauermeister et al., 2010; Albury & Byron, 2016), including sexual harassment, physical assault, and rape (Corriero & Tong, 2016). MSM may be targets of rape culture in many of the same ways as women though, to my

knowledge, no study has specifically examined MSM's experience of rape culture or how rape culture manifests through MSM's use of dating apps.

Willed Ambiguity among MSM

A recent study I conducted with Dr. Viviane Namaste and colleagues (2020) explored sexual misconduct among MSM at universities. While the subject of our research was not rape culture, our findings highlight the societal beliefs that MSM have about sexual violence and the ways in which MSM are willingness to minimize or dismiss sexual harassment, sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual advances.

First, participants in our study (Namaste et al., 2020) reported that they had a difficult time recognizing sexual misconduct between men. MSM participants attributed this difficulty to the fact that gay male culture is highly sexualized. As we explained in the article:

> This belief that all (gay) men are, *a priori*, sexualized, creates a general context in which it is difficult for some men to even recognize that they may have not fully consented to participate in certain activities, or that their participation may have been coerced. (p. 9-10, emphasis in original)

We also found that MSM's expectations for inappropriate sexual behavior were used to dismiss incidents of inappropriate sexual behavior. When MSM experienced unwanted sexual conduct or pressure to engage in unwanted sexual activities, those practices were excused as "normal".

Participants in our study (Namaste et al., 2020) also expressed concerns about being socially isolated if they refused or expressed disinterest in sexualized spaces or interactions. They explained that they often felt pressured to conform to and enjoy sexualized spaces and interactions. While our study focused on MSM's university experiences, this finding suggests

that MSM may dismiss the sexualized misconduct they encounter through dating apps in order to maintain social relations with other MSM.

Our research (Namaste et al., 2020) revealed that MSM have a "willed ambiguity" to the social norms that perpetuate sexual misconduct against MSM. Despite recognizing the existence of sexual misconduct, MSM intentionally dismissed their concerns. Within the context of this dissertation, these findings suggests that MSM can be complicit in systems and practices that condone and perpetuate sexual violence and rape culture against MSM.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented literature from several fields that provided the background necessary to examine the nature and extent to which MSM experience sexual violence through their use of dating apps. I began with a review of literature on sexual violence and technology-facilitated sexual violence and, in doing so, noted that few studies have considered how people experience sexual violence through their use of dating apps.

Next, I reviewed literature on online sexual harassment and sexting to contrast those phenomena with the phenomenon of unsolicited DPs. While research on unsolicited DPs is limited, I found that the majority of the research was conducted on heterosexual men's and women's experiences. Findings from these studies may offer insight into MSM's experiences, though research explicitly focused on MSM's experiences is needed.

I then reviewed literature on sexual consent. There, I found a lack of research on MSM's negotiations of consent, specifically related to their use of dating apps. While McKie's (2015) thesis offered information about MSM's online consent practices as precursors to in-person sexual encounters, there was a lack of literature on consent negotiations related to MSM's online sexual interactions.

I also reviewed literature on rape culture and found a couple of gaps. First, the heteronormative ways in which rape culture has been defined and conceptualized means that the idea of rape culture may not fully or accurately reflect MSM's experiences. Second, few studies have examined manifestations of rape culture on dating apps, or through people's use of dating apps. And again, the limited studies that examined rape culture relative to dating app use were focused on heterosexual women's experiences. Together, these gaps demonstrate the need to explore how rape culture manifests in the experiences of MSM and in their use of dating apps.

This dissertation addresses these gaps in the literature by investigating the nature and extent to which sexual violence is facilitated through MSM dating apps. I took a three-pronged approach to research this sexual violence by conducting three studies: Study 1 on sexual consent, Study 2 on unsolicited dick pics, and Study 3 on manifestations of rape culture.

In the next chapter, I explain the method I used to conduct my research (i.e., interpretive phenomenology. In doing so, I provide a brief background on phenomenology, explain why I chose interpretive phenomenology as my method, and discuss my epistemological framework. I then present my research procedure, starting with ethics approval and continuing with participant recruitment, data collection, and transcriptions. Next, I explain how I conducted my data analysis. In Study 1 and Study 2, I employed interpretive phenomenological analysis. In Study 3, I used thematic analysis. In reviewing these two methods of data analysis, I compare them and explain why I chose interpretive phenomenological analysis for Study 1 and Study 2, and why I chose thematic analysis for Study 3. The chapter closes with a discussion about the quality principles that I addressed in my research.

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CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This dissertation investigates and addresses the nature and extent of sexual violence among men who have sex with men (MSM) that is facilitated through their use of dating apps. In pursuit of this goal, I took a qualitative approach to examine MSM's experiences online and in person. I adopted phenomenology as my research method. Specifically, I used interpretive phenomenology, which seeks to explain how participants make sense of their experiences and how those meanings expose the relevance and significance of a phenomenon. The phenomenon researched in this dissertation is sexual violence facilitated through MSM's use of dating apps.

As explained in Chapter 1, my investigation took a three-pronged approach to examine sexual violence. Specifically, I researched three specific phenomena: sexual consent, unsolicited dick pics, and rape culture. I researched each phenomenon separately. In Study 1, I examined the ways in which MSM communicate and negotiate consent through their use of dating apps. In Study 2, I investigated MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics. In Study 3, I uncovered how rape culture manifests through the experiences of MSM dating app users. These three studies are presented in Chapters 4–6.

In this chapter, I explain my research method (i.e., interpretive phenomenology) and detail the procedures I employed to recruit participants, collect data, and analyze data. I start by providing a brief background on phenomenology and then discuss interpretive phenomenology as my method. I present my epistemology and discuss methodological congruence. Next, I explain my procedures, including participant recruitment, data collection, and transcription. I then discuss how I analyzed my data. Specifically, I used interpretive phenomenological analysis in Study 1 and Study 2, and I used thematic analysis in Study 3. Since there are some similarities between interpretive phenomenological analysis and thematic analysis, I compare the two and

contextualize them within phenomenology. This chapter closes with a discussion about rigor, credibility, and contribution so as to address the quality principles of qualitative research.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of a phenomenon. A phenomenon has been described as "that which appears" (van Manen, 2016, p. 27) or "that which shows itself in itself" (Heidegger, 2010, p. 32). A phenomenon can be anything that people perceive or and/or experience. Thus, phenomenology is an inquiry into the meanings of phenomena that people encounter and perceive in their everyday lives (van Manen, 2016).

Numerous authors have outlined similar goals for phenomenology. According to Finlay (2013), phenomenology is research that strives "to return to embodied, experiential meanings of the world directly experienced… for fresh, complex, rich description of phenomena as concretely lived" (p. 173). Creswell and Poth (2018) said that phenomenology aims to describe the common meaning of a phenomenon by exploring the meaning of that phenomenon in participants' experiences. And van Manen (2016) explained that phenomenology aims to capture experiences as participants live them. While there are other authors who wrote about phenomenology and offered different interpretations (e.g., Finlay, 2009; Gill, 2014), the overarching goal of phenomenology is to understand and describe a phenomenon in as specific and detailed ways as possible. Phenomenology is not a prediction or a generalization; rather, it is an investigation into the lived experiences of participants that uncovers the meaning of a phenomenon.

Phenomenology was conceptualized in the early 20th century by Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher and mathematician (Groenewald, 2004; Laverty, 2003). Husserl developed descriptive phenomenology, which consisted of "bracketing" (i.e., a process in which a researcher suspends their pre-existing beliefs so as not to influence their research) and describing

a phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004; Laverty, 2003). Martin Heidegger, who was Husserl's student, developed interpretive phenomenology. Heidegger broadened phenomenology through hermeneutics, a philosophy of interpretation (Groenewald, 2004; Laverty, 2003). Heidegger did not agree with Husserl that researchers could "bracket" their beliefs. Heidegger emphasized that a person's thoughts, perceptions, and experiences shape the way in which they view the world and, as such, it is impossible for people to escape from their beliefs. With Heidegger's integration of hermeneutics, phenomenology moved beyond descriptions of phenomena toward a search for meaning rooted in people's everyday experiences (Reiners, 2012).

Comparing Descriptive Phenomenology and Interpretive Phenomenology

It is important to understand the difference between Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's phenomenology and, subsequently, the implications of both. Husserl believed that researchers could understand the essence of a phenomenon by collecting descriptions of the phenomenon from people's consciousness. However, as stated above, Heidegger recognized that people – including researchers – cannot escape their own consciousness. Researchers who inquire into a phenomenon through people's lived experiences are conducting research into people's consciousness. This means that phenomenological researchers, while investigating the meaning of a phenomenon, are simultaneously investigating how people make meaning. Thus, Husserl's phenomenology is focused on epistemology, while Heidegger's phenomenology is focused on ontology.

Husserl's descriptive phenomenology and Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology have implications on research practices and outcomes. When employing Husserl's phenomenology, a researcher must "bracket" their biases in order to provide an objective description of the phenomenon (Reiners, 2012). In contrast, when employing Heidegger's phenomenology, a

researcher does not bracket their biases because they intend to explore the meaning of the phenomenon and engage with their previous knowledge and experiences that may relate to the phenomenon (Reiners, 2012). Descriptive phenomenology emphasizes describing the universal essence of a phenomenon, while interpretive phenomenology emphasizes understanding a phenomenon in context (Groenewald, 2004; Laverty, 2003). Literature suggests that descriptive phenomenology is useful in studies that aim to explore general aspects of a phenomenon that, in previous studies, were either not sufficiently conceptualized or not conceptualized at all (Lopez & Willis, 2004). In contrast, interpretive phenomenology is useful in studies that aim to examine the lived experiences of people within a specific context and how people's beliefs and experiences come together to inform the meaning of a phenomenon (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Interpretive Phenomenology

For this dissertation, I employed interpretive phenomenology as my method. There were a few reasons why I chose interpretive phenomenology as my method. First, the goal of this dissertation is highly contextual: to uncover and address the nature and extent of sexual violence against MSM that is facilitated through their use of dating apps. Researching the phenomena (e.g., sexual violence, sexual consent) in context (i.e., dating apps, interactions among MSM) was critical to my investigation. Second, I agree with Heidegger in that people cannot escape their beliefs or experiences. People constantly build on their beliefs and experiences throughout their life to make sense of the world around them and to make meaning of different phenomena (Pinch & Bijker, 1984). Third, as an "insider" researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), I have my own beliefs about and experiences with MSM dating apps, which are relevant to an investigation on sexual violence facilitated through MSM dating apps.

In his book, *Phenomenology of Practice*, Van Manen (2016) expanded upon the traditions of interpretive phenomenology to explain that a researcher could approach this method as a practice. A researcher employing interpretive phenomenology uses this method with the purpose of serving and advancing their professional practice. This means that a phenomenology of practice aims to enhance the understanding of a phenomenon for immediate application to people's everyday experiences. Van Manen's (2016) phenomenology of practice encourages swift dissemination of knowledge in order to put research findings into action.

This is another reason that I employed interpretive phenomenology as my method. As explained in Chapter 1, my goal is to disseminate and apply my research in a meaningful, accessible, and timely manner. Particularly since sexual violence that is facilitated through MSM's use of dating apps has implications on the everyday lives of MSM, I appreciate and relate to van Manen's (2016) notion of phenomenology of practice. Moreover, I have already worked to disseminate and apply my findings to address sexual violence. I explain the different ways in which I have applied my findings in Chapter 7.

Epistemology

Epistemology is the philosophical study of knowledge and it concerns how knowledge is acquired (Harding, 1987). Epistemology asks questions such as: Who knows information? What information can be known? How do people learn information? And how can knowledge be tested? Epistemology operates as the framework for an investigation into a phenomenon and, subsequently, it is important for a researcher to outline and understand the epistemology of their research. The epistemological framework for my doctoral research included queer theory and intersectionality, both of which have been used as epistemologies in phenomenological research (e.g., Shin et al., 2017; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Green, 2007; Krane, 2001).

With precursors in feminist theory and critical race theory, queer theory challenges socio-cultural assumptions and critically examines power relations (Butler, 1988, 2006; Foucault & Hurley, 1990; Foucault & Faubion, 2000). Numerous authors have also written about how queer theory "deconstructs" normative systems and binaries, such as the heterosexual-homosexual binary and the gender binary (Gamson, 2000; Kirsch, 2000). From queer theory, there are four central themes particularly relevant to my research: challenging the idea of fixed identities; challenging binaries; recognizing the socio-cultural, historic, and political contexts in which a phenomenon resides; and examining power relations that exist among people and within systems.

In my research, I apply queer theory to scrutinize power relations between MSM, examine how power is used to perpetuate and/or resist sexual violence, and explore how identity and power intersect. Queer theory also allowed me to examine the contexts in which phenomena reside. I was able to contextualize the phenomena of unsolicited dick pics (in Chapter 5) and rape culture (in Chapter 6) in MSM's use of dating apps while also remaining conscious of the beliefs, practices, and norms that may have affected MSM's perceptions and experiences. Lastly, as I explained in Chapter 2, research has shown that MSM occupy a unique social position in society because of their majority and minority identities and, as such, MSM can both experience sexual violence and perpetrate sexual violence. Thus, integrating queer theory into my epistemological framework allows me to challenge the victim/perpetrator (or survivor/perpetrator) binary that is often constructed when considering people's experiences of sexual violence.

Intersectionality is a concept developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) to draw attention to the systemic barriers and forms of oppression that women of color confront in society, particularly when dealing with experiences of sexual violence. In her seminal work, Crenshaw (1991) explained that certain identities are granted more power in society and that people with marginalized identities, especially people with multiple marginalized identities, are more

vulnerable to violence. I apply an intersectional lens to my research to examine how power exercised on dating apps and in person may exacerbate sexual violence against MSM, and to consider ways in which individuals and institutions can take action to address sexual violence in society. Moreover, I use intersectionality to remain critically conscious of the differences among MSM, since MSM do not comprise a monolithic community. MSM are diverse individuals of different races, ages, sexualities, and genders.

My epistemological framework included queer theory and intersectionality, which aligns with my epistemological beliefs that people's experiences and understandings are developed through social structures, power, oppression, and differences in individual identities (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Shin and colleagues (2017) encouraged researchers using an epistemology that integrates intersectionality to scrutinize systems of power and explore avenues for advocacy and action. As such, this epistemological framework reinforces my methodology that addresses systems of power and identity-related challenges while also calling for social action and societal change (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), which I do in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8. As this section demonstrates, I have addressed methodological congruence in this dissertation.

Procedure

As explained above, a researcher who employs interpretive phenomenology investigates a phenomenon through the experiences of participants and, in doing so, uncovers the meaning of a phenomenon. Interpretive phenomenology includes an in-depth analysis of participants' narratives and encourages researchers to engage with participants in discussions about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). A researcher who employs interpretive phenomenology aims to gather rich descriptions of participants' lived experiences

with a phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). As such, I collected data through semi-structured interviews, which I explain later in this section.

Alase (2017) said that researchers employing interpretive phenomenology should select participants from a homogeneous sample to encourage a comprehensive and unified understanding of a phenomenon. The sample population I selected was MSM dating app users, and I investigated sexual violence facilitated through MSM dating apps by interviewing this specific population. Granted, MSM dating app users are not a monolithic community. As Crenshaw (1991) and others have noted (e.g., Raj, 2011; Robinson, 2015; Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2016), there is great diversity in the identities and experiences of MSM. Recognizing the diversity of MSM dating app users, Alase's (2017) suggestion for a homogeneous sample still aligns with the overarching goal of this dissertation because I investigated sexual violence through the experiences of a specific population: MSM dating app users.

In the following sections, I explain the procedures that I used for my interpretive phenomenological method, beginning with ethics approval. I continue by discussing participant recruitment and participant demographics, and by discussing data collection. Next, I explain how I transcribed the data from the semi-structured interviews. I then detail how I conducted my data analysis. Since I conducted data analysis in two ways – with interpretive phenomenological analysis and thematic analysis – I break down the data analysis section into two subsections. In the first subsection, I explain interpretive phenomenological analysis. In the second subsection, I explain thematic analysis. Since there are similarities between interpretive phenomenological analysis and thematic analysis, I also include a brief section that highlights the differences and provides an explanation as to why I used the two methods of analysis. The chapter ends with a summary of the main points.

Ethics Approval

In June 2017, I submitted an ethics application to McGill University's Research Ethics Board, with support from my PhD supervisor, Dr. Shaheen Shariff. The Research Ethics Board oversees all research at McGill, including research that involves human subjects. My ethics application was approved in August 2017.

Participant Recruitment

I recruited participants in Autumn 2017. The participants I recruited were required to identify as MSM dating app users and be at least 18 years old. Alase (2017), who wrote about methods for interpretive phenomenology, suggested a sample of 25 participants. My goal was to have 25 participants.

A review of MSM dating app literature showed that studies in this field often had recruitment periods ranging from six weeks (e.g., Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014) to six months (e.g., Landovitz et al., 2013). Some studies with similar numbers of participants (e.g., Jaspal, 2017; Licoppe, Rivière, & Morel, 2016; Ahlm, 2017) did not specify a recruitment timeline. Van De Wiele and Tong (2014), however, explained that they recruited participants for six weeks and secured 63 participants. Willynck (2013) conducted his thesis at McGill University and studied MSM dating apps. He had a sample size of 14 participants and recruited for at least four weeks (Willynck, 2013). I originally decided to recruit participants during September 2017. However, the four-week recruitment period only yielded 17 participants, so I continued recruiting. By November 2017, I secured the desired total of 25 participants.

I used two methods for recruiting participants: flyers and snowball sampling. I was inspired to use flyers because Willynck (2013) and others (e.g., Ahlm, 2017) used flyers in their recruitment of MSM dating app users. I designed the flyer myself, which invited self-identified

MSM who use dating apps to participate in a research study on sexual consent. I specified sexual consent rather than sexual violence to attract a broader population of MSM dating app users. People interested in participating were invited to contact me via email. The flyers were posted in Montreal around McGill University and in the Gay Village.

I also used snowball sampling to recruit participants. Snowball sampling is "a recruitment method that employs… participants' social networks to access specific populations" (Browne, 2005, p. 47). Numerous studies that have researched the experiences of MSM dating app users employed snowball sampling as a core component of their recruitment method (e.g., Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014; Jaspal, 2017; Corriero & Tong, 2016; Ahlm, 2017; White Hughto et al., 2017). Snowball sampling includes asking "respondents themselves… to further recruitment through personal messages, email, and posts" (Corriero & Tong, 2016, p. 130). Thus, after confirming MSM respondents as participants, I asked them to help recruit other MSM dating app users. I recruited several participants through snowball sampling though the majority was recruited by flyers.

Participant Demographics

The 25 participants in this research self-identified as MSM dating app users. There were 24 who identified their gender as male and one who identified as gender-fluid. The majority of the participants identified as gay, though two participants identified as queer and one identified as bisexual. None of the participants identified as transgender (i.e., all of the participants were cisgender). Participants were aged from 18 to 62 years old. Most of the participants identified as white, though there were three who identified as Middle Eastern, three who identified as Hispanic, three who identified as multiracial, one who identified as Asian, and one who identified as Black. The names of participants presented in Chapters 4–6 are pseudonyms.

Out of the 25 participants, there were 23 who used Grindr. Many used other dating apps and website as well, such as Tinder, Scruff, Hornet, and OkCupid. Participants' main reasons for using MSM dating apps were for sex, meeting people, and finding dates or relationships. Participants used these apps for a minimum of one hour per week and a maximum of 23 hours per week. The average amount of time participants spent on MSM dating apps per week was seven hours. Participants has used these apps for a minimum of one month and a maximum of 11 years. The average time participants spent using MSM dating apps was over four years.

Data Collection

MSM who expressed interest in my study were invited to participate in an interview lasting 60 minutes. I followed the structure of the Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbott's (2015) study and offered participants three interview options: in person, by telephone, or via online chat. These options were offered to increase participant comfort, convenience, and anonymity. The majority of interviews were held in person, though three were conducted by telephone and three via online chat. I scheduled all of the interviews via email. The data I collected from these semi-structured interviews with 25 self-identified MSM dating app users (i.e., "the MSM Interviews", see Chapter 1) comprise the data I analyzed in Studies 1–3 (see Chapters 4–6).

Consent Form and Ethics

All of the 25 participants were required to read and sign an informed consent form before conducting the interview. The consent form included my contact information as well as information about McGill University's Research Ethics Board and their contact information. The consent form also included a list of sexual violence resources available from community organizations and websites to ensure participants could seek support, if need be.

For the participants who interviewed in person, I presented them with a consent form when we met, and I informed them that they were required to sign before conducting the interview. For the phone interviews, I required participants to sign and return the ethics consent form before we interviewed. Similarly, the participants who participated in an online interview were required to sign and return the ethics consent form before the interview.

Identifiable information was removed from the questionnaires and interview transcriptions. The questionnaires and transcriptions were coded with numbers that matched the codes used for the interviews. The files were stored on my laptop and backed up on my external hard drive, all in password-protected folders. Both my laptop and my external hard drive were also password protected. As explained above, these procedures were reviewed and approved by McGill University's Ethics Review Board.

Questionnaire

All of the 25 participants were required to complete a questionnaire as part of the interview. For the interviews held by telephone or via online chat, participants were required to complete the questionnaire before interviewing. Participants who attended an in-person interview completed the questionnaire in person before I began the interview.

In the questionnaire, I asked participants about how they heard about the study and their reason for participating. Participants answered demographic questions about their age, gender identity, gender behavior, sexual orientation, and race. Participants also provided information about the dating apps they used, how long they had been using dating apps, the amount of time they spend on apps, and their reasons for using dating apps.

In-Person Interviews

I coordinated with participants to arrange the location of the in-person interviews. The location was determined based on two criteria: privacy and participant comfort. I conducted

many interviews on McGill University's campus. As a research assistant on the IMPACTS Project (IMAPCTS, 2021), I had access to a private office in the Faculty of Education, which is where I conducted a few interviews. I also conducted interviews in the private study rooms of the Redpath Library at McGill University.

Ahlm (2017) and Willynck (2013) suggested conducting interviews at coffee shops near a participant's home or work to make the interviews more accommodating and convenient for participants. Of course, privacy was a concern given the potentially sensitive nature of my research topic (i.e., sexual violence). Therefore, I emailed participants a list of the topics I would cover in the interview as we arranged our interview location. I also visited the potential locations to assess privacy before agreeing to conduct an interview there. Only three participants chose to interview in a coffee shop and neither I nor the participants experienced any issues with privacy.

Telephone Interviews

Three participants chose to interview by telephone. I sent them my phone number in an email and asked them to call me at a specific time. I am not sure where participants were located when they called, except for one participant who specified that he was calling me from his car on his commute home from work. For the three interviews, I was in a private room at McGill University. I conducted the telephone interview from my cell phone, which was on speaker, and recorded the audio using my laptop. I deleted the call from my phone's history to ensure that I did not save the participant's contact information.

Online Interviews

I conducted three interviews via online chat. I asked the participants to verify that they had a reliable internet connection before I started the interview. Participants' responses to questions posed in the online interviews were, understandably, not as detailed as participants' responses in the telephone or in-person interviews. Conversely, some of the online responses

were more direct than the telephone or in-person responses. One participant emphasized that they appreciated the anonymity of interviewing online.

Interview Structure

As explained above, a researcher conducting a phenomenological study investigates the lived experiences of participants to uncover the meaning of a phenomenon. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), data for phenomenological research is primarily collected through in-depth interviews. Other scholars writing about phenomenological research similarly suggested collecting data via semi-structured interviews (e.g., Alase, 2017).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the 25 MSM participants. Guiding questions framed our conversations, which included a variety of topics related to dating app use and sexual consent. Specifically, I asked the participants to:

- Explain their reasons for using MSM dating apps.

- Describe a typical conversation they have with other users on MSM dating apps.

- Discuss their experiences of sending and receiving sexually-explicit images, including unsolicited dick pics.

- Define "sexual consent", explain how consent is communicated, and discuss consensual and non-consensual interactions they have experienced through MSM dating apps.

- Define "rape culture", discuss rape culture, and explain how rape culture manifests through MSM dating apps.

- Discuss their experiences of blocking and reporting other MSM dating app users.

- Consider how their experiences with dating apps related to their "real life" experiences.

When I asked participants to define sexual consent and rape culture, I did not provide them with official definitions (e.g., Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993), nor did I correct them if their

definitions differed from the definitions I adopted in this research (e.g., Shariff, 2017). Additionally, some participants did not answer some of my questions. I did not force a participant to respond to a question if they did not want to. Notably, some participants did not answer my question if they had ever sent another MSM dating app user an unsolicited dick pic.

Depending on participants' responses, I posed additional and follow-up questions in which I asked them to clarify their thoughts, provide more information about their experience, and/or explore the topic further. As such, I followed Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) suggestion for engaging participants in a personalized discussion about their experiences: "Interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of participants' responses, and the investigator is able to enquire after any other interesting areas which arise" (p. 57). I found this suggestion helpful as I conducted the semi-structured interviews because it allowed me to develop a "relationship" with the participants and go further in depth into their experiences. To be clear, the questions I asked always remained related to the topics listed above.

Most interviews lasted about 60 minutes. The shortest interview lasted 45 minutes and the longest interview lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. The in-person and telephone interviews were audio-recorded. The online interviews were saved as text files.

Since the three online interviews were saved as text files, they did not need transcribing. I, along with a team of five undergraduate research assistants, transcribed the 22 audio-recordings of the in-person and telephone interviews. I explain the transcription process in the next section.

Transcriptions

In September 2017, I recruited undergraduate students to volunteer as research assistants on the IMPACTS Project (IMPACTS, 2021). My goal was to mentor undergraduate students interested in research by allowing them to be directly involved in research. I publicized the

opportunity through student faculty associations at McGill University. Numerous undergraduate students expressed interest in participating. Through applications and interviews, I selected five undergraduate students to be volunteer research assistants on a team that I led. Each student was required to sign a confidentiality agreement, which was approved by IMPACTS and McGill University's Research Ethics Board.

One of the undergraduate students' tasks was to transcribe interviews. To prepare them for this, I trained the students and explained my expectations for transcriptions, emphasizing the importance of confidentiality and accuracy. We practiced transcribing together and individually before I granted them access to the audio files. The audio files were anonymized and saved in a password-protected folder. Each student was only granted access to their assigned audio recordings, not the recordings of other students on the team. I gave each undergraduate student four to five interviews to transcribe and they were given a month to complete their transcriptions.

Once I received the undergraduate students' transcriptions, they deleted the audio files and the transcripts. I reviewed each transcript with its corresponding audio file to ensure accuracy in each interview and consistency across the interviews. After verifying each transcript twice, I deleted after the audio recordings. The transcripts from the semi-structured interviews conducted with 25 self-identified MSM dating app users in Autumn 2017 comprise the data of this dissertation (i.e., "the MSM Interviews").

Data Analysis

There are multiple ways to conduct data analysis in phenomenological research (Laverty, 2003). For this dissertation, I used two methods of analysis: interpretative phenomenological analysis and thematic analysis. I used interpretive phenomenological analysis in Study 1 and Study 2, which are presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, respectively. I used thematic analysis in Study 3, which is presented in Chapter 6.

Below, I explain interpretive phenomenological analysis and thematic analysis and briefly compare the two. I also explain why I used interpretive phenomenological analysis for Study 1 and Study 2, and why I used thematic analysis for Study 3.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an approach for analyzing data that allows for a deep and careful understanding of participants' experiences with a phenomenon. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) explained that IPA is "a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences" (p. 1). Since IPA explores what is important in participants' experiences as well as the ways in which participants interpret and perceive their own experiences, researchers who engage in IPA conduct analysis at two levels: "the researcher is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of X" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 35). Thus, IPA is a method that is used to investigate and interpret the experiences of people who have experienced a common phenomenon.

I followed Dr. Ada Sinacore's approach for analyzing data. (Dr. Sinacore is a member of my doctoral committee.) This was the approach that I took to analyze data for both Study 1 and Study 2. Below, I explain the process that I used to analyze data for Study 2, which examined MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics.

Step One: Editing Transcripts

First, I saved each transcript as a Word document with a participant number (i.e., P1, P2, P3, …, P24, P25). I added page numbers and line numbers to each document. These documents became the original transcripts that I could refer back to if I needed to contextualize my data and/or check my data later in the process.

I duplicated each transcript. Then, I read each transcript and edited it so that I only kept data related to unsolicited dick pics. If I was unsure about keeping a passage, I kept it. After I

edited a transcript, I noted my general impressions of the participant's experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics. These impressions could be a word or a phrase, though they were meant to capture my thoughts and reactions about the participant's experiences. I noted a maximum of ten impressions per participant transcript.

Step Two: Creating Data Charts and Coding Data

Next, I created a data chart for each transcript. Essentially, this required collecting all of the passages from an edited transcript and categorizing them under my impressions. In a Word document, I created one table that corresponded to each one of my impressions. Each table included two columns. The second column was where I copied and pasted a passage from the edited transcripts. The first column was where I listed the page number and line number of where the passage was located in the original transcript.

However, if there was only one passage in a table – that is, if there was only one passage that corresponded to an impression – it was collapsed into another table. Therefore, each table included a minimum of two passages that related to one of my impressions. This process of coding the data resulted in each document having a maximum of ten tables, each of which included at least two passages about a participant's experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics.

Step Three: Mapping Impressions

Next, I created a summary of the codes. This was done using an Excel spreadsheet. The number of the participant transcript (e.g., P1, P2, P3) was listed in the first column and each impression was listed at the top of the spreadsheet. Starting with Participant 1, I input the impressions into the first row of the spreadsheet. Each time I added another participant to the spreadsheet, I would either build off an impression already listed, or I would add a new

impression. When the impression was found in a participant's transcript, I marked an "X" in the column and row corresponding to the impression and the specific participant.

Step Four: Collapsing Impressions

Using the Excel spreadsheet, I identified impressions that had few "X" marks in their column. I found that impression in each transcript and considered how that impression could be included in another impression that had more marks. As I collapsed the impressions into categories, I sometimes renamed them to reflect the impressions that I was merging. Throughout this process, I returned to the data charts, codes, and transcripts to verify that the passages I had previously identified were still accurately captured by the new names of each category. As such, I was determining how I could collapse and classify the impressions into themes.

Step Five: Developing and Mapping Themes

Going back to the data charts, I looked for themes across transcripts. Through an iterative process of checking data charts, passages from the transcripts, and the spreadsheet, I developed themes. Each theme was saved as its own Word document and merged the tables from the data charts in Step 2. Thus, each document consisted of one table that included passages from participant transcripts as well as the corresponding page and line numbers.

Once I had developed the themes, I made a new Excel spreadsheet that mapped where each theme was captured in each participant transcript. For Study 2, the themes became the three "dimensions" of unsolicited dick pics and the seven factors that impact MSM dating app users' experiences (see Chapter 5).

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is a method of examining and recording patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). TA is broadly understood as a method that uses categorization to

uncover themes that have emerged across participants or contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). TA is not limited to a specific theoretical framework. This means that TA can be applied to research with diverse epistemologies and is appropriate for phenomenological research (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

TA is a method for identifying and analyzing patterns of meaning among data and, subsequently, determining the meanings that are most important and relevant to answering the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 82). Themes help the researcher understand a portion of a phenomenon and, as such, they represent a reduction or simplification of the phenomenon, or part of the phenomenon. A theme does not necessarily offer or reveal a deeper meaning, though a theme can capture a particular aspect of a phenomenon and bring the researcher closer to answering the research questions (van Manen, 1997).

In Study 3 on rape culture (see Chapter 6), I developed themes by taking both a semantic approach and a latent approach. A semantic approach means examining the surface meanings of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012). Semantic content is directly observable in the transcripts, such as when participants explicitly described manifestations of rape culture through their use of dating apps. In contrast, a latent approach investigates "the *underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84, emphasis in original). As such, a latent approach requires interpretation of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012; Joffe & Yardley, 2004). I used a latent approach to explore implicit references to rape culture, such as when participants discussed beliefs and systems that condone and perpetuate sexual violence against MSM who use dating apps.

For Study 3, I followed the outline for TA as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). I began by reading and rereading the participant transcripts several times in detail. In my readings of the transcripts, I noted my ideas and impressions. Once I was familiar with the data – which required several readings of the transcripts – I assigned codes that referred to passages in the data and summarized major ideas. Next, I identified overlapping or related codes and began to develop themes, which were identifiable by recurring patterns in the data. These themes were therefore related and informed one another. After developing an initial set of themes, I reviewed the data and the codes again in order to refine the themes. At this point, I defined each theme and wrote descriptions of them. I also made notes that helped me distinguish between themes. I then organized the data according to themes and selected key passages that highlighted each theme. I re-examined the themes and the data passages within each theme, and I completed my analysis by organizing and mapping the themes.

Comparing Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis and Thematic Analysis

There were similarities and differences between Dr. Sinacore's approach to IPA and Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to TA. Both IPA and TA involved coding and theme development, but the processes were different. When I developed my codes in IPA, I noted my initial impressions that described my observations and thoughts about the data. These impressions were brief comments that later had to be revisited and developed. Only at that stage, did I begin to explore and develop themes.

In contrast, I did not start coding in TA until I had sufficiently familiarized myself with the data. This required reading the transcripts several times and making notes about individual passages as well as notes about an entire transcript – or the overall data set. After completing this

step of familiarization, I developed codes for all of the data. Through an iterative process, I revisited and developed codes and, in doing so, I identified patterns that became themes.

As the differences in the processes show, IPA considers both the unique experiences of individual participants as well as the patterns of meaning across all participants' experiences. In contrast, TA focuses mainly on patterns of meaning that are present across all participants' experiences. The differences between IPA and TA reflect and advance the objectives of each of my studies. Study 1 examined MSM dating app users' conceptualizations and negotiations of sexual consent. In Study 1, I was interested in both the individual thoughts and experiences of MSM dating app users as well as the collective thoughts and experiences of MSM dating app users. Study 2 investigated MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics. As such, Study 2 aimed to explore how different MSM perceived and experienced the phenomenon of unsolicited dick pics while also examining MSM's collective perceptions of and experiences with the phenomenon. For these reasons, IPA was the ideal method of analysis for Study 1 and Study 2.

In contrast, Study 3 investigated manifestations of rape culture. For this study, MSM's individual experiences were meant to inform a common understanding of how rape culture manifests through dating apps. I used TA to analyze the data in order to identify repetitions and form themes and, subsequently, translate those themes into a meaningful and unified narrative.

Quality Principles

In qualitative research, standards of quality are often measured in terms of trustworthiness and rigor (Cope, 2014; Morrow, 2005). Spencer and Ritchie (2012) identified three guiding principles – rigor, credibility, and contribution – to assess these standards of quality, which I followed in my research. Below, I explain the three principles and how I addressed them.

Rigor

Rigor is concerned with methodological validity and ensures proper research processes as well as dependability of design and findings (Spencer & Ritchie, 2012). Cope (2014) explained that dependability can be assessed when a researcher verifies the steps another researcher is taking in their process. As I explained above, Dr. Ada Sinacore, who is a methodologist, worked with me as I conducted my data analysis. Dr. Sinacore and I met regularly so she could check my work and guide me through the process. I also kept detailed notes that can serve as audit trails for other researchers (Cope, 2014).

Rigor can also be assessed by gauging reflexivity (Spencer & Ritchie, 2012). Reflexivity is a technique in which a researcher examines how their own beliefs, experiences, and judgments may have impacted their research (Morrow, 2005). And within interpretive phenomenology, reflexivity is an examination of how the researcher's perspectives interact with the participants' perspectives (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Of course, a researcher who is conducting interpretive phenomenology is not expected to "bracket" their biases (Groenewald, 2004; Laverty, 2003). Rather, the researcher is expected to recognize how their orientation to and relationship with the data may influence their analysis (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). With this in mind, I took notes throughout the process to reflect on my positionality, check my theoretical and/or conceptual perspectives, and ensure consistency in my analysis (Spencer & Ritchie, 2012).

Credibility

Credibility refers to "the extent to which findings are believable and well-founded" (Spencer & Ritchie, 2012, p. 234) and gauges how the researcher arrives at their conclusions. One way to assess credibility is through how well the research process has been documented (Spencer & Ritchie, 2012). As outlined in the previous sections about my research procedures, I

was methodical in how I approached each stage of the process. I kept notes throughout that detailed how I collected and analyzed the data. Again, this serves as an audit trail (Cope, 2014).

Thomas and Magilvy (2011) recommended peer debriefing as another means to assess credibility. As mentioned in the transcription section, there were five undergraduate students who engaged in my research with me. During their two years on my research project, we met regularly to analyze and discuss data. These meetings served as an outlet for me to check the credibility of my work and verify that my analysis aligned with other people's analysis.

Another way to assess credibility is by "checking for representativeness of the data as a whole" (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p. 152). Credibility, in this sense, can be assessed by verifying that there are similarities within transcripts and across transcripts. The 25 participant transcripts provided a rich sample with enough data that I was able to identify similarities and trends and develop themes.

Spencer and Ritchie (2012) also explained that credibility can be determined by providing raw data and discussing how evidence informs arguments. In each of my three studies, I included original quotes from participants. These quotes allow the reader to assess and compare my claims against the raw data. Moreover, I engage in discussions in each study in Chapters 4–6 as well as in an overall analysis in Chapter 7. In these four chapters, I provide both participant explanations and researcher explanations (made by me) to demonstrate how I arrived at my conclusions.

Contribution

Spencer and Ritchie (2012) explained that contribution refers to "the value and relevance of research evidence… to theory, to policy, to practice, to methodological development or to the lives and circumstances of individuals" (p. 229). Contribution, as the name implies, is the extent

to which the research has contributed to the betterment of society (Spencer & Ritchie, 2012; Morrow, 2005).

This dissertation has advanced knowledge and contributed to society in several ways. First, as explained in Chapter 2, there is only one other study that has examined MSM's negotiations of consent through their use of dating apps (McKie, 2015), and that study did not take into account the sexual interactions among MSM that remain online. Study 1, which is presented in Chapter 4, addressed that gap by examining the ways that MSM conceptualize, communicate, negotiate, and enact consent on dating apps and in person.

Second, unsolicited dick pics are emerging as a new field of study (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018) and the majority of studies within this limited field have focused on heterosexual women (e.g., Amundsen, 2020). Several studies on unsolicited dick pics have encouraged future research to focus on the experiences of LGBTQ+ people (e.g., Waling & Pym, 2017; Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018; Mandau, 2019). Study 2, which is presented in Chapter 5, addressed this gap by examining MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics.

Third, rape culture has been conceptualized as a heteronormative concept (e.g., Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993) and only recently have academics recognized that rape culture affects people of other genders (e.g., Shariff, 2017). Study 3, which is presented in Chapter 6, contributes to new knowledge by investigating rape culture against MSM. Furthermore, since there are limited studies on rape culture that is facilitated by dating apps (Powell & Henry, 2017), Study 3 advances knowledge by examining the ways in which rape culture manifests on dating apps, and through people's use of dating apps.

Fourth, as I explain in Chapter 7, I have already applied my research to educational programs, community work, and a public campaign about consent. I have also shared my

research and knowledge of these issues through media interviews and work with technology companies. In these ways, my research has already begun to contribute to different fields.

Lastly, there are many ways that my research can be applied to address sexual violence and technology-facilitated sexual violence. In Chapter 8, I give recommendations for education, law and policy, and dating app companies. In doing so, I emphasize the value of my research and offer suggestions for ways in which my findings can contribute to society.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a background on phenomenology and explained interpretive phenomenology, which was the method I used to investigate sexual violence that is facilitated through MSM's use of dating apps. I explained my epistemological framework and its suitability for my research. Next, I detailed the procedure that I took in my research, describing participant recruitment, data collection, and the transcription process. I then discussed how I analyzed the data – through interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) and thematic analysis (TA) – and explained why I choose IPA for Study 1 and Study 2, and why I chose TA for Study 3. I closed this chapter with a discussion about quality principles.

The next three chapters present the three studies that detail the qualitative findings from the MSM Interviews. Chapter 4 is the manuscript from Study 1 on MSM's conceptualizations and negotiations of consent. Chapter 5 is the manuscript from Study 2 on MSM's experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics. Chapter 6 is the manuscript from Study 3 on manifestations of rape culture. Between Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 is a bridging statement that summarizes the first manuscript and introduces the second manuscript. There is also a bridging statement between Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 that summarizes the second manuscript and introduces the third manuscript.

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CHAPTER 4: STUDY 1

"I think that's as close as it gets to consent": Men who have sex with men's

conceptualizations and negotiations of sexual consent on dating apps and in person[2]

Abstract

Smartphone-based dating applications like Grindr are popular among men who have sex with men (MSM). It is common for MSM dating app users to seek out sexual interactions with other MSM on apps and in person. Despite this, there is limited research on how MSM conceptualize and practice sexual consent in their online and in-person sexual interactions. This study examined MSM's conceptualizations and negotiations of sexual consent on dating apps and in person. A phenomenological data analysis of 25 interviews with MSM dating app users revealed that many participants could identify consent frameworks and aspects of consent but did not necessarily apply those understandings to their own experiences. There were MSM who did not apply consent to their online or in-person sexual interactions, those who believed that consent hinges on connecting to and remaining logged into dating apps, and others who relied on behavioral cues on dating apps to communicate and assess other users' consent. When meeting other dating app users in person, some MSM perceived their in-app chats as a contract while others perceived the meetup as a confirmation of consent. This paper discusses how MSM assumptions and consent practices can foster non-consensual sexual experiences online and in person, and how the affordances of dating apps can facilitate but also complicate online negotiations of consent.

Keywords: sexual consent, dating apps, MSM

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[2] I am the sole author of this manuscript and, as of April 2021, it has not yet been submitted to a journal. As such, please note that the title and text of this manuscript (i.e., Chapter 4) may differ from the final publication.

Introduction

Men who have sex with men (MSM) are avid users of smartphone-based dating applications like Grindr, Tinder, and Scruff (Albury et al., 2019). MSM use dating apps such as these for many reasons, including to socialize, develop friendships, and pursue romantic relationships (Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014), though the pursuit of sexual activity is a priority for MSM (Albury et al., 2019). Rice and colleagues (2012) found that three out of four MSM had a sexual encounter with someone they met on Grindr. Badal and colleagues (2017) reported that more than half of their 3105 MSM participants used dating apps and websites frequently and, among those frequent users, two-thirds of them had a high average number of casual sex partners in the past 12 months. Whether or not MSM meet another user in person for a sexual encounter, MSM dating apps are highly sexual spaces where it is common for users to exchange sexually explicit phots and engage in sexually explicit conversations (Grov et al., 2014).

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of studies that examine MSM dating app users' consent- and safety-related concerns. Bauermeister and colleagues (2010) investigated the perceived risks of young MSM who met sexual partners through the internet. They found that more than four in ten were concerned about their physical safety, and more than one in ten were worried about forced sex or rape (Bauermeister et al., 2010). Albury and Byron (2016) similarly examined the perceived risks of same-sex dating app users and found that participants were more concerned about unwanted sexual contact, sexual harassment, and sexual predators than their sexual health. Corriero and Tong (2016) investigated concerns among Grindr users and found that sexual violence and personal safety were among users' top concerns. More recently, Albury and colleagues (2019) took a mixed methods approach to investigate safety, risk, and wellbeing among dating app users. There were MSM from their interviews and workshops

who explained that it was important to negotiate consent online before meeting another user for an in-person sexual encounter because of concerns about violence and harm (Albury et al., 2019).

This study aims to build on these studies and others by exploring how MSM dating app users conceptualize consent and how they negotiate and enact consent online and in person. Through a qualitative analysis of data from interviews with 25 MSM dating app users, this study also sheds light on tensions between MSM dating app users' understandings of consent and the ways in which they communicate and practice consent. This study concludes by examining consent-related issues that MSM dating app users have experienced in their online and in-person interactions and considering how such issues may lead to non-consensual sexual experiences for MSM dating app users.

Background

Sexual consent has been conceptualized in numerous ways, including as a mental attitude defined by a person's internal desires (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016). Consent has also been described as a behavior that is visible and observable by others (Beres, 2007). Additionally, studies have found that some people conceptualize and practice consent as a discrete event or action (Muehlenhard et al., 2016), and as a continuous process of ongoing negotiation (Humphreys, 2004; Beres, 2014). Consent is understood and practiced in many different ways, illustrating that consent is nuanced and complex. When preparing for and engaging in a sexual encounter, MSM may not know how their partner thinks about or practices consent – and they also might not recognize their own idea of consent, or how they expect consent to be communicated and enacted. The differences in MSM dating app users' conceptualizations of consent, and their negotiations of consent, has implications in how safe and comfortable each person is during the sexual encounter.

People communicate sexual consent in explicit and non-explicit ways. Explicit communication of consent is an unambiguous agreement of wanting to engage in a sexual activity (Beres, 2007). Explicit communication is a key part of the affirmative consent model, which promotes active and enthusiastic communication and emphasizes seeking out and securing a 'yes' from a sexual partner before engaging in a sexual activity (Gruber, 2016). Explicit expressions of consent have been shown to be more important when engaging with a new sex partner for the first time (Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2007) and less important when kissing or caressing a partner (Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014). However, studies have shown that some people perceive explicit communications of consent as lacking romance, hindering spontaneity, reducing excitement, and ruining the mood (Humphreys & Herold, 2003; Humphreys, 2007) and some people think explicitly communicating consent is unnecessary (Beres, 2010; Jozkowski & Hunt, 2013).

People also communicate sexual consent in less explicit ways, such as through verbal or non-verbal cues (Beres, 2007; Pineau, 1996), as well as by engaging in a sexual activity (Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014). While some authors (e.g., Block, 2004) have labeled non-explicit expressions of consent as "implicit consent", Muehlenhard and colleagues (2016) argued that "inferred consent" or "implied consent" are more accurate terms because "the presumption of consent occurs entirely in the observer's mind" (p. 463).

Much of the consent literature has examined sexual interactions between heterosexual men and women and has centered around gendered sexual scripts where men request consent and women give consent (Mortimer, Powell, & Sandy, 2019; Hindes & Fileborn, 2019). According to Hollway's (1998) male sexual drive discourse, this gendered notion of men's role in the consent process assumes that men always seek sex and, subsequently, men always consent to sex. The limited research on non-heterosexual sexual scripts has showed that MSM may subscribe to some

heterosexual scripts and deviate from others (Wiederman, 2015). Like heterosexual men, MSM are more likely to pursue sexual activities and to engage in sexual activities more quickly than women (Klikenberg & Rose, 1994). In contrast, there is no traditional "gatekeeper" role in MSM sexual relationships (Klikenberg & Rose, 1994). Beres, Senn, and McCaw (2014) found that it is common for MSM to rely on behavioral cues rather than explicit communication to seek and give consent for sexual activities and that some MSM may practice consent by not doing or saying anything to stop the sexual advances of their partner. Additionally, MSM may understand discussions about condom use and safe-sex practices as indicative of consent (Edgar & Fitzpatrick, 1993; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999) as well as discussions about sexual positioning (i.e., who is the penetrative partner and who is the receptive partner) and if or how drugs and alcohol are involved in a sexual activity (McKie, 2015). In fact, recent research by Albury and colleagues (2019) similarly found that MSM interpret in-app conversations about condom use, sexual positioning, and hosting (i.e., which MSM dating app user can host for an in-person sexual encounter) to be part of consent negotiations that precede potential meetups.

In his Master's thesis, McKie (2015) examined the online and offline negotiations of sexual consent among MSM and found that MSM were conflicted and unsure about how to practice traditional sexual scripts, yet felt pressured to engage in them nonetheless. McKie also found that MSM tend to follow "a technology-specific script to initiate sexual contact" (p. 108) and that online discussions about sexual interests were interpreted as permission for in-person sexual activities if or when the MSM met in person. In fact, McKie described this as "a common scenario" among his 365 MSM participants (McKie, 2015, p. 109) and he concluded that MSM are missing key understandings of consent frameworks that were originally designed for heterosexual men.

At the time of writing, McKie's (2015) thesis is the only study I could find that examined MSM sexual consent practices strictly in online spaces. Although McKie found that MSM often attempt to replicate in-person consent negotiations online and MSM feel more freedom to deviate from sexual scripts when interacting online, his research tended to frame online sexual interactions as a precursor for in-person sexual encounters (McKie, 2015). It is common for MSM dating app users to chat and engage in sexual interactions online without ever meeting in person (Albury et al., 2019; Race, 2015), meaning that many sexual interactions that MSM dating app users have with other MSM are only virtual, not physical. Thus, while McKie's (2015) thesis offers some insight into online consent practices among MSM, little is known about how MSM conceptualize, communicate, and practice consent when engaging in exclusively online sexual interactions.

A few studies offer insight into how MSM dating app users may think about sexual consent online and experience non-consensual behavior from other users. Jones' (2005) investigation of MSM chatroom practices showed that MSM are careful about how they engage with other MSM online, taking incremental steps in sharing sexual images and personal details out of concern that other MSM will not reciprocate or leave them in vulnerable positions. In contrast, Race (2015) asserted that affordances of online spaces, such as anonymity and personal control, and MSM expectations of sexual promiscuity collapse the boundaries associated with physical sexual activities. As such, MSM can easily bypass steps that are typical prerequisites for in-person sexual activity – like chat or conversation – and immediately engage in casual sexual interactions online (Race, 2015). Thus, while Jones (2005) asserts that MSM dating app users may try to establish mutual understanding and a minimal level of trust before engaging in sexual conduct online, Race (2015) suggests that MSM are emancipated from and may dismiss conventional in-person consent negotiations when interacting online.

Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz (2018) asserted that MSM dating app users also experience the tension of constantly trying to determine what to share, how much, and when in their interactions with other MSM online. While it is common for MSM dating app users to quickly jump into sexual conversations online, some MSM may find in-app chats that are too sexual too fast inappropriate (Fitzpatrick & Birnholtz, 2018). Particularly since MSM use dating apps for a variety of reasons (Albury et al., 2019), MSM dating app users may experience an in-app sexual advance as unwanted depending on their motivations for being online at that moment (Fitzpatrick & Birnholtz, 2018).

Method

This study presents data from a qualitative research project that examined MSM dating app users' sexual experiences online and in person. Semi-structured interviews with 25 MSM dating app users were conducted in Autumn 2017 in Montreal, Canada. Participants were recruited for three months using snowball sampling and flyers posted at a large Canadian university and in Montreal's gay neighborhood. Recruitment materials invited MSM using dating app to talk about issues of consent. Participants were required to be at least 18 years old and did not receive any compensation for participating.

Following Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbott's (2015) approach, I offered participants three interview options: in-person, by telephone, or by online chat. These options were intentionally offered to promote comfort, accessibility, and anonymity. Most participants chose an in-person interview, though three participants wanted to interview by phone and three others decided to interview via online chat. Each interview lasted about an hour and was conducted in either English or French. Data from French interviews were later translated into English.

All 25 participants self-identified as MSM dating app users, with 24 participants identifying as male and one identifying as gender-fluid. Two participants identified as queer, one identified as bisexual, and the rest identified as gay. None of the participants identified as transgender. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 62, with about half of the participants being 25 years of age or younger. The majority of participants identified as white, though participants also identified as Middle Eastern, Hispanic, Multiracial, Asian, and Black. Grindr was the most popular dating app among participants, though they also used other apps and websites, including Tinder, Scruff, Hornet, and OkCupid. Participants' use of MSM dating apps ranged from a minimum of one month to a maximum of eleven years, with an average of over four years. Participants spent about seven hours per week on MSM dating apps on average, and their primary motivations for using MSM dating apps were for sex, meeting people, and dates/relationships. The names used to identify participants in this study are pseudonyms.

In their interviews, I asked participants to define sexual consent, describe their understandings of sexual consent, and talk about how they enacted consent in their online and in-person interactions with other MSM dating app users. I did not provide participants with an official definition of consent, nor did I correct them if their conceptualizations differed from the consent frameworks I adopted for this research.

For this study, I employed an interpretive phenomenological research method (Adams & van Manen, 2008) to examine participants' understandings of consent and their experiences of negotiating and enacting consent online and in person. Queer theory and intersectionality were integrated into my epistemological framework in order to scrutinize social norms and systems of power, including identity-related power and oppression. I analyzed the data using interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) in order to explore how MSM dating app users experience and make sense of a phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon I

examined was sexual consent that is conceptualized, communicated, negotiated, and enacted by MSM dating app users.

Findings

Most participants defined consent in terms of agreement, including Oscar (22, gay, male, White) who explained that "consent is agreement to a sexual activity" and Luis (43, gay, male, Hispanic) who said that "consent is a 100% agreement." In fact, "agreement" was the word that most participants used to define consent, though many participants also used words like "acceptance", "approval", "affirmative", "authorization", and "permission".

Participants stated that desire was an important aspect of consent. Robert (23, gay, male, White) said consent is "always about wanting to do something" and Charlie (24, gay, male, White) asserted that "consensual behavior is behavior that is welcome or that is wanted." Participants emphasized the difference between willing to engage in a sexual activity and agreeing to engage. Elijah (18, gay, male, White) said, that there is "a very clear distinction between wanting to do something and not wanting to do something." Similarly, Toby (20, gay, male, White) explained that an enthusiastic yes is different from a reluctant yes and Mason (26, bisexual, male, Multiracial) gave the example: "There's 'yeah, sure' and then there's, 'yes, definitely!'"

Participants also said that consent should be freely given, using words like "voluntary" to emphasize that someone should not be forced or coerced into a sexual activity. Toby asserted that power dynamics must be scrutinized before giving consent, saying that each person should consider "if they're in a position of power where [their] 'yes' has a condition attached to it." Participants also discussed the importance of each person's mental state, including Oscar who

said that "it's only consent if the person isn't intoxicated." Luis added that, in order to consent, "the person cannot be passing out, or not really be paying attention, or half asleep."

Participants explained that people consenting to a sexual activity should be informed and understand any potential consequences. Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black) described consent as an "informed decision-making process" while Elijah said that consent consists of understanding "the implications and everything that will come of it". Ravi (28, gay, male, Middle Eastern) said that consent only occurs when "everybody accepts the results of the action."

Many participants used the word "mutual" to emphasize that consent should be reciprocated by all people involved in the sexual activity. Skyler (28, queer, male, White) defined consent as "engaging in a sexual or romantic activity with mutual permission from both sides" and Dion (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern) described consent as "something mutual between two or more individuals." Some participants specified consent as between two people while other participants, like Skyler, discussed consent relative to groups of three or more. "Consent means getting an agreement on two or more parties to take part in a certain act or some sort of practice," said Skyler.

Participants talked about the need for consent to be ongoing throughout a sexual encounter. Theo (20, gay, gender-fluid, Multiracial) said that consent "can be given for a certain period of time" and can be revoked. Ang (36, gay, male, Asian) explained that "just because they say 'yes', doesn't mean that it's a 'yes' forever." Participants similarly said that a person is responsible for paying attention to the needs of their sex partner(s) and respond to those needs if, or when, they no longer consent. Said Theo, "if there's any – *any* – sign, expression of non-consent, [the person] has the obligation to pick up on it." Similarly, Hugo (23, queer, male, Hispanic) explained, "if you ask and then they're like, 'I'm not interested,' it's like, 'Okay you're not interested. Let's do something else.'" A few participants stressed that consent includes caring

for others and respecting their decisions. "Consent comes with some sense of responsibility," explained Diego (35, gay, male, Hispanic). "It's not just having the authorization, but you have to think for yourself and the other person – and hopefully the other person is doing the same that you do."

Conceptualizing Consent on Dating Apps

Participants talked about what consent looked like in their online interactions with other MSM dating app users. Some participants conceptualized consent as connecting to and remaining active on MSM dating apps. Joe (31, gay, male, White) said, "I feel like I'm already consenting just by having a profile" and Karam (46, gay, male, Middle Eastern) said, "The fact that I'm on Grindr, "I'm consenting to pretty much whatever the interaction is." Pierre (25, gay, male, White) agreed:

I think that everyone who is on Grindr has consented. Nobody is obligated to be on Grindr and there are numerous social networks that you can join. Grindr is well known for being just for sex. If you are on Grindr and you do not want a sexual interaction, maybe you're in the wrong place.

Other participants did not think that consent applied to their online interactions with MSM dating app users. Explained Noah (28, gay male, White), "The idea of consent, like the concept of consent, doesn't structure at all my interactions online. I don't structure my own interactions on Grindr in terms of consent."

Many participants, however, said that consent applied to their online interactions with other MSM dating app users. Said Dion, "consensual is when there is a mutuality and a gradual back and forth between the people who are chatting, interacting." Several participants talked about consent as an ongoing process of expressing sexual desire and assessing the sexual desire of other MSM dating app users. Skyler said he interpreted other users' consent by "taking

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behavioral cues as to whether or not someone wants to engage." For Jadyn, consent was present when MSM dating app users replied to one another's messages. "If they respond to you, then that's one of those situations where you don't need to ask for consent because they're continuing the conversation, so that means you can keep going forward," said Jadyn. Robert interpreted consent when other MSM dating app users engaged in image sharing: "If someone sends pictures and you reply with pictures, for me that's consent." In contrast, Diego said that an MSM dating app user demonstrated consent when they did not object to his sexual advances. Michael (18, gay, male, White) felt similarly: "You don't really see a lot of consent happen on Grindr frequently. People will just send pictures. And I think that's as close as it gets to consent."

Although participants said that they relied on other MSM dating app users' behavior to indicate consent, many participants recognized that other users' actions were open to interpretation. Explained Mason:

> When you're reading faintly what someone is writing to you, you don't have all the information, right? It's very easy to misinterpret what someone is saying or feeling or thinking, and that could lead to a problem.

Karam said that when MSM dating app users approached him and he did not consent to their interaction, he would not reply to them. "Usually, I ignore. If I don't answer, if I don't respond, that means I'm not interested, I don't want to pursue anything further," said Karam. Some participants, however, explained that not responding to a user's messages was not always a definitive no. "In this world of applications and we're trying to message each other and find out if people are interested," said Jadyn.

There were some participants who were more explicit in their consent practices with other MSM dating app users. Jadyn said, "You can ask someone with a direct question, so they can tell you 'yes' or 'no'." Elijah explained that he identified consent "primarily through a 'yes' or 'no',

especially if it's over text, like on Grindr." Both Michael and Robert had examples of consent-seeking questions, saying that they had asked users, "Do you want to trade pictures?" or "Do you want a naked picture?" before sending sexual images. Similarly, Skyler said that he would ask questions like, "Do you want to do this? Do you want to do that?" to other MSM dating app users in order to seek out and secure their consent. Toby also emphasized the importance of asking questions when interacting with other MSM online:

> I think that's really important, phrasing things like questions. So, I mentioned that my Grindr profile is me in bed. The other day I had someone message me and they're like, "Let me slip into bed with you," or something. And I would have been more attracted if they had been like, "Can I join you in bed?" and phrase it like a question, rather than something that's assertive and not giving me a choice.

Ang stressed that MSM dating app users could always revoke their consent online: "If you're conversing on the app and I say, 'Yes, I agree to this,' but I say later on, 'No, I change my mind, I am no longer into it,' that second message supersedes my first one." Dion felt that being explicit was "the ideal way" to negotiate consent with MSM dating app users online. Diego agreed: "How do you enact consent? Well, the best way is to voice it. By making it as clear as possible."

Conceptualizing Consent between Dating Apps and In-Person Interactions

Participants considered how sexual consent could span from their online interactions to their in-person interactions with MSM dating app users. One participant thought that MSM do not apply consent to any of their sexual interactions, whether they were on dating apps or in person. Said Noah, "I don't think that gay men perceive their relationships, let alone their discussion on apps, in terms of consent."

Several participants felt that online interactions were useful to discuss sexual interests with other MSM dating app users, but they did not perceive the in-app chat as fully consenting to

an in-person sexual activity. "One form of consent is figuring out what are you actually meeting up for. You go through the steps of what a sexual encounter is and, if you're still into each other, what you would do with each other," said Charlie. Participants explained that if or when they would meet an MSM dating app user in person, that is when they would consent. They described the importance of needing to verify consent when meeting an MSM dating app user in person. For example, Joe said that he needed "a double consent before following through" on any sexual activity he had discussed online.

Participants said that discussing sexual interests with other MSM on dating apps contributed to an expectation that they have sex when meeting in person. Said Skyler, "if you go and actually meet up with someone, especially to hook up with them, there might be implied consent for literally anything, or at least anything that was vaguely mentioned in conversation." Ang also felt that MSM dating app users viewed their in-app chats as a guide for how to behave when meeting in person:

> When people interact a certain way on Grindr and then they physically meet up and pursue the encounter, they're going to think back to what they talked about, or the way that they act on the app, for what or how they should be acting in the encounter.

Nicolas (62, gay, male, Multiracial) gave an example of this in his experience:

> If the guy is a bottom, and he advertises that he is a bottom on his site, and he then refers to it in the conversation that he would like me to top him, and when we meet, personally, the guy is letting me know indirectly that he wants me to top him. That's giving me consent.

Dion and Pierre explained that discussing sexual interests on MSM dating apps created a contract that foreshadowed an in-person sexual encounter. Pierre preferred to establish consent online because "it's not convenient to sit at the table and explain it, or in bed where you are going

to take their hands and explain to them what you want to do." For Pierre, negotiating consent in person "would be absurd" because the online interaction already allowed MSM to explore their sexual compatibility, confirm their interests, and express consent for a sexual activity. Although he viewed the online conversation "like a contract," Pierre made it clear that he did not think it was necessary to have "a meeting with a notary for a sexual relationship."

Other participants felt that meeting an MSM dating app user in person allowed them to continue the negotiations they had begun online. According to these participants, the in-person meetup allowed them to check in and confirm the other person's needs, desires, and limits before engaging in any sexual activity. "Consent on Grindr only takes you so far because someone can always change their mind when they meet you. Consent is not something that is there, it can change throughout the experience," emphasized Mason. Oscar asserted that consent for physical sexual activities could only be given in person: "I would say it would have to be offline. You can't consent on Grindr to meet up and have sex."

Despite this, participants explained that MSM dating app users did not always explicitly consent during their in-person sexual encounters. "Explicit consent is great in principle but I'm not sure it's something that people always practice," said Skyler. Toby felt that MSM should be explicit when communicating consent, rather than relying on behavioral cues or body language to express consent, but he critiqued these kind of affirmative consent practices, saying "it just feels so awkward to explicitly ask someone." Noah, Jadyn, and Ravi each talked about "going with the flow" when interacting with a sex partner to see how the encounter evolved. Ravi, however, recognized that taking this approach could be problematic. "Consent in gay culture, I guess it's invisible. I like to go with the flow. But if there's things that I'm not comfortable with, I have to stop the person." Ang felt that when MSM dating app users rushed to arrange a sexual encounter, they might be less careful about seeking and securing consent. "When you go for fast encounters,

you're not necessarily going to have the time to cover all the angles of what you consent to and what you don't consent to," said Ang.

There were participants who said that consent for an in-person sexual encounter depended on context and the sexual activity. "We have normalized oral sex as something we just do, and we don't consent for it. I can't say the same thing for anal sex," said Ravi. Charlie similarly felt that it was important to establish consent for penetrative sex. "I know another big thing about consent with guys on Grindr is whether or not you're going to have anal sex. Also, if you're going to use the condom or not," said Charlie. Luis said it was important for MSM dating app users to say if they were taking PrEP (i.e., pre-exposure prophylaxis, a drug that prevents HIV transmission) or if they were interested in using recreational drugs during the sexual encounter. Toby emphasized that consent was "really important" when engaging in a sexual activity "with a new person." Ang, who had a few sexual fetishes, emphasized that it was critical to establish consent with a partner before engaging in any sexual activity. "Being a leather man and a kinkster, for me consent is *extremely* important," said Ang (emphasis his own).

Participants discussed the challenges that came with meeting an MSM dating app user for the first time. Karam explained that if he invited someone to his home for a sexual encounter but then changed his mind, it would create an awkward situation. "Especially if they're in my house, in my space, I am too nice to say, 'You know what, this isn't what I was expecting. Can you please leave now?'" Theo talked about the challenges he experienced when he invited MSM dating app users to his house for sex and then changed his mind. "I make them travel, and then I have to tell them to go away, and it feels rude, which is not completely legitimate. Consent is something continuous, but it's very hard in practice," said Theo. Toby said that the time MSM spent preparing for a sexual encounter contributed to feelings that sex was expected:

There are issues with consent in a lot of Grindr hook-ups because there's an expectation, like if you traveled to get here, if you douched as a bottom, if you shaved or whatever, it's [sex] very much expected. It's a blessing and curse because you know what you're getting into but then if you don't know them and they're doing sexual things that you're not attracted to or whatever, you don't want that expectation to force you into something you're not comfortable with. And I think that happens for some people.

Participants talked about the differences between discussing and enacting consent with MSM dating app users online and in person. "It's very easy to say 'yes' or 'no' to someone online. Saying 'yes' or 'no' it to their face is another story," said Mason. Theo asserted that it was harder to express non-consent to someone in person because of the potential for physical violence. "The difference lies in the amount of safety. Being in front of someone and saying 'no' is much scarier than being online and saying 'no'," explained Theo. Michael said that it was more important to establish consent in person rather than online. "I feel like consent isn't really that important on Grindr. I feel like it matters more when you take it into the real world. You're going to have real implications good or bad on their personal wellbeing," said Michael. In contrast, Toby thought that the affordances of MSM dating apps made it easier to express non-consent online. "In some ways, consent is better on Grindr then in real life because people who might feel marginalized or scared can easily block people. You can just block people if you feel unsafe," explained Toby. Ang felt that all MSM could improve their consent practices, whether they were interacting online or in person:

Gay and queer communities are communities that want sexual encounters. I don't think enough work is done to make sure that everyone is on the same page, to make sure that consent is given, and that consent is obtained. And it's happening on the apps, it's happening in the bar scene.

Discussion

Participants' understandings of sexual consent generally aligned with consent frameworks as they described consent in terms of agreement, being freely given, informed, enthusiastic, and continuous (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). In fact, many participants' conceptualizations reflected the affirmative consent model, and some participants even identified the affirmative consent model (Gruber, 2016) by name.

Despite this, data analysis revealed a tension between how MSM dating app users understood sexual consent and how they conceptualized, communicated, and practiced sexual consent in their own experiences. Some participants even noticed the tension between their understandings of consent and how they practiced consent. This finding suggests that MSM dating app users know and understand common discourses of consent but disregard them as they pursue sexual interactions with other MSM on dating apps and in person.

Generally, it was easier for participants to connect sexual consent to their in-person sexual encounters than their online sexual interactions. One reason for this may be because MSM use dating apps for a variety of reasons, including sexual and non-sexual (Albury et al., 2019), and a sexual consent framework is not always applicable to their online interactions. Another reason seems to be because MSM dating app users have different interpretations of what constitutes a sexual activity. For some MSM, even though their online interactions may be sexual, they perceive the interaction as a conversation about sex rather than a sexual act. This distinction may be similar to dating app users who differentiate between "exchanging pics" and "sexting", where the former is meant to inform, establish trust, and negotiate sexual interests, while the latter can be understood as a sexual activity taking place online (Albury & Crawford, 2012; Albury & Byron, 2016). Data analysis also revealed that some MSM perceive sexual activities as purely physical acts so, for them, consent frameworks do not apply to their online interactions. MSM

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with this perspective likely subscribe to traditional sexual scripts about men and sex, specifically that the only "real" sexual activity is sexual intercourse (Graham, 2017). These findings suggest that where MSM interpret the location of the sexual activity to be – whether on dating apps or in person – may impact if or how they apply consent frameworks to their sexual interactions with other MSM dating app users.

One participant admitted that he did not structure any of his online sexual interactions with other MSM dating app users around sexual consent, even though he well understood consent discourses. For this participant, consent was important for in-person sexual encounters because of the potential for physical harm. MSM dating app users may perceive consent for online sexual interactions with other MSM less relevant because of their ability to disconnect from the apps if or when they experience something uncomfortable. In fact, several participants said that there were greater risks associated with in-person sexual interactions. Thus, another reason that MSM dating app users do not apply consent frameworks to their online sexual interactions may be because they perceive unwanted sexual conduct in online spaces to be less harmful than unwanted sexual conduct in physical spaces.

The affordances of online spaces may contribute to MSM dating app users' feelings that sexual consent is more important in person. Dating apps like Grindr, Scruff, and Tinder provide in-app mechanisms, such as blocking and reporting, that users can enact when they experience unwanted sexual conduct. MSM can also disconnect from dating apps if they do not feel comfortable or do want to be online. In-person sexual encounters do not come with the same supports or protections that are accessible on dating apps. Leaving a space that is uncomfortable, harmful, or violent is more difficult in person than online and can have dangerous repercussions. MSM dating app users may minimize or disregard the importance of consent on dating apps

because not having consent for an online sexual interaction is perceived as less consequential than not having consent for an in-person sexual interaction.

Some MSM dating app users conceptualize sexual consent as the one-time action of logging into an app. Previous research similarly found that consent can be understood as a discrete event or action (Muehlenhard et al., 2016), and this finding shows how MSM conceptualize and practice consent as a discrete action in their use of dating apps. Since these apps are widely understood as sexual spaces and MSM both encounter and seek out sexual activity on these apps (Gudelunas, 2012; Grov et al., 2014), MSM may confuse a user's consent for a specific sexual act with their consent to occupy a sexual space. And while MSM have a history of equating sexual consent to being present in gay spaces (e.g., bathhouses, Grov et al., 2014), MSM also have a history of not seeing themselves as victims of non-consensual and sexually violent conduct such as sexual assault or rape (Davies, 2002). Furthermore, since MSM may assume other MSM always want sex (Hollway, 1998), it may be hard for MSM to express non-consent online. Findings from this current study therefore suggest that MSM dating app users who conceptualize and practice sexual consent as a one-time act of connecting to an app may minimize or dismiss non-consensual sexual behaviors they commit against other users, and they might also minimize or dismiss any non-consensual sexual conduct they experienced while online.

MSM may conceptualize online consent as a discrete action because of how app-spaces are constructed and practiced. When people download an app, they agree to the app company's terms and conditions of use and give their consent to the legal guidelines and "community standards", which outline what conduct is permissible among users. Users also have their own expectations about what is permissible behavior on apps and users co-construct app norms with other users that are perpetuated and reinforced over time (Duguay, 2017). Thus, each time a

person logs into an app and uses that app, they reaffirm their agreement to the app company's policies, and they participate in the norms of that app-space. This means that some MSM may conceptualize and practice sexual consent in online spaces as a discrete action because that idea of consent is similar to how they conceptualize their relationship with those spaces and how they engage with those spaces.

Many participants applied sexual consent frameworks to their online sexual interactions. For example, they talked about asking questions and seeking mutual agreement from other MSM dating app users before sending sexual messages or images – two approaches that reflect the affirmative consent model (Gruber, 2016). There were other approaches participants used to express consent for an online sexual interaction, such as sending sexual images, replying to another users' sexual images, and having sexually suggestive conversations. This finding, which aligns with previous research (McKie, 2015; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014; Beres et al., 2014), suggests that MSM can signal consent on dating apps by engaging in a sexual interaction.

While MSM employ a variety of practices to communicate and negotiate consent online, these practices are complicated by the affordances of online technologies. For example, data showed that MSM dating app users can practice continuous consent online by exchanging messages and continuing to engage with another user, and they can withdraw their consent by saying "no" or abandoning the in-app chat. The act of leaving a conversation, however, may not always be a clear indicator of non-consent. Interactions between dating app users are asynchronous (Suler, 2004) such that a user may take days to reply – or may never reply – to another user's messages. Moreover, recognizing that MSM use dating apps for a variety of reasons (Albury et al., 2019), a lack of response could indicate non-consent, but it could also indicate a lack of desire to engage at that moment. If an MSM dating app user tries to (re)connect with a user another time, the sender may intend for their subsequent sexual advance to prompt a

response, while the recipient experiences that additional advance as harassing – since the recipient thought they signaled their disinterest by not responding previously. Thus, while certain behaviors may be understood as an expression of continuous consent, the notion of continuous consent on dating apps is complicated when MSM attempt to decipher what the lack of "continuous" interaction from another user actually means.

The assessments that MSM dating app users make as they interpret other users' online behaviors reflects what Muehlenhard et al. (2016) described as "implied consent" and "inferred consent". MSM dating app users who receive sexual advances can imply their consent or non-consent to a sender through their behavior. MSM dating app users who make sexual advances can infer whether or not a recipient consents based on their interpretation of the recipient's behavior. Some behaviors, like having a flirty conversation or sharing sexual photos, may be inferred as signaling consent. Other behaviors, like responding to a message, may not necessarily signal desire for a sexual interaction. MSM may also make assumptions about other dating app users according to the photos and text available on their profile. Findings from this study suggest that, similar to how MSM negotiate consent in person (Beres et al., 2004), MSM dating app users rely on behavior and other cues to negotiate and enact consent online. Their reliance on cues and the lack of explicit communication between MSM dating app users suggests that misunderstandings about other users' consent may be common in their online interactions.

Findings revealed that MSM dating app users have different perceptions about how in-app chats connect to in-person sexual encounters. Some participants perceived online negotiations of consent as a contract for what will happen in person. MSM dating app users who practice consent as a contract seem to perceive consent as a singular act, such that once consent is given it lasts for the duration of the sexual interaction (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Other MSM dating app users from this study assume the consent of their sex partners when they meet in person because they

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prefer to "go with the flow" and hope to minimize any "awkward" in-person discussions. MSM who assume consent seem to be concerned about hindering spontaneity or ruining the mood (Humphreys & Herold, 2003; Humphreys, 2007). These MSM also seem to perceive the online interaction as an expression of partial consent, which is confirmed by meeting in person and continues so long as the sexual encounter aligns with their expectations. Previous research, which has found that MSM interpret their online discussions about sexual interests as consent for in-person sexual activities (McKie, 2015; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Edgar & Fitzpatrick, 1993), supports this finding.

MSM who practice consent as a contract or assume their partner's consent aim to minimize the time spent having in-person discussions and maximize the time spent engaging in a sexual activity. Practicing consent as a contract or assuming consent can facilitate MSM dating app users' in-person sexual encounters since there is no perceived need for a discussion and they can immediately engage in the agreed-upon sexual activity when they meet. Of course, as participants noted, assuming a partner's consent for an in-person sexual encounter also raises the possibility that non-consensual sexual conduct may occur.

Findings revealed that MSM dating app users also practice continuous consent as they shift from interacting online to meeting in person. For these MSM, in-app conversations offer an idea of what may happen during their sexual encounter but do not dictate what must happen. These MSM dating app users continuously negotiate consent as they interact with other MSM online and in person. Notably, participants emphasized that consent for "riskier" in-person sexual activities, like penetrative sex and kinky sex, could be discussed online but should be confirmed in person – while negotiating consent for "normalized" in-person sexual activities, like oral sex, was less important. These findings support previous research (Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2007; Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014; McKie, 2015) and suggest that the perceived risk

of physical harm correlates to MSM dating app users' desires to establish consent when meeting another user in person.

As one of a limited number of studies that has investigated sexual consent related to dating app use, there are ways that future studies can build on and improve upon this research. As many of the participants in this study were under 30 years old, it would be beneficial to focus on the experiences of older MSM dating app users. Particularly because of large societal shifts around homosexuality and technology in the past few decades, it is possible that younger and older MSM dating app users conceptualize and communicate consent differently, and that they have different concerns about consent and safety. Similarly, the lack of transgender and gender-diverse participants in this study should be addressed in order to investigate the unique consent- and safety-related challenges they experience relative to their sexual and gender identities. And since the majority of participants were English speakers living in Canada, it would be valuable to explore if or how differences in linguistic and cultural backgrounds relate to how MSM conceptualize and negotiate consent online and in person.

Lastly, with results from this study revealing that some MSM dating app users do not apply the idea of sexual consent to any of their online or in-person sexual interactions, future research should explore why this is the case. Future research could also investigate how perceived risks associated with different sexual activities impact how MSM dating app users communicate and enact consent in their online and in-person interactions. Similarly, researchers might explore the strategies that MSM employ to minimize consent- and safety-related concerns when interacting with other dating app users online and in person.

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Bridging Statement

Through Chapter 4, I addressed Objective 2 of my dissertation: to engage in Study 1 on sexual consent practices among MSM dating app users. In the manuscript titled, *"I think that's as close as it gets to consent": Men who have sex with men's understandings and negotiations of sexual consent on dating apps and in person*, I presented findings from my phenomenological study, which examined the diversity among MSM dating app users' conceptualizations of consent. I also investigated the differences in how MSM negotiate consent, notably, how they communicate consent and enact consent in their interactions with other dating app users.

Through Study 1, I found that MSM dating app users generally understand sexual consent discourses and can identify important aspects of sexual consent frameworks, such as the affirmative consent model (Gruber, 2016). Despite this, many participants talked about online and in-person consent practices that contrasted their own definitions and conceptualizations of consent. Findings showed that participants relied on cues and assumptions to communicate consent and establish consent as they interacted with other MSM online and in person. Participants described situations when they felt expected or pressured to engage with other MSM dating app users. Thus, while MSM dating app users may be able to recognize consent discourses, MSM dating app users may not consistently apply consent frameworks to their own experiences and, in some cases, they may intentionally refrain from enacting consent frameworks as they pursue sexual interactions online and in person.

Findings from Study 1 in Chapter 4 also demonstrated that it was sometimes challenging for participants to express and assess non-consent when they interacted with other MSM dating app users, especially online. Some of this can be attributed to the nature of online interactions (Suler, 2004), though it is important to recognize that sexual scripts (McKie, 2015), app norms (Duguay, 2017), and the culture of MSM dating apps (Race, 2015; Fitzpatrick & Birnholtz, 2018)

may also affect how MSM dating app users understand and experience non-consensual sexual conduct online. Particularly since MSM may not view themselves as victims of non-consensual conduct (Davies, 2002), it may be easy for MSM dating app users to dismiss or minimize online sexual violence.

In the next chapter I present the manuscript from Study 2. Thus, Chapter 5 details my investigation of MSM dating app users' understandings of and experiences with unsolicited dick pics. The unsolicited "dick pic", which refers to a photo of a penis that is sent without the consent of the recipient, has received a lot of public attention in recent years (Paasonen, Light, & Jarrett, 2019) and has been described as a common phenomenon in contemporary online dating culture (Mandau, 2019). Research on unsolicited dick pics is emerging as a new field of study (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018), though much of the available research has focused on heterosexual relationships and the experiences of heterosexual women (e.g., Amundsen, 2020). Authors who have researched unsolicited DPs have consistently called for future studies to focus on the experiences of non-heterosexual people and, more specifically, the experiences of men who have sex with men (Waling & Pym, 2017; Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018; Mandau, 2019). I address this gap in the literature and address Objective 3 of my dissertation by engaging in a phenomenological analysis of MSM dating app users' experiences to examine how MSM trivialize and dismiss incidents of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

CHAPTER 5: STUDY 2

The three dimensions of unsolicited dick pics: MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics[3]

Abstract

The unsolicited 'dick pic' (DP), which refers to a photo of a penis that is sent without the consent of the recipient, has been framed as inevitable in contemporary online dating. This study investigated the experiences that men who have sex with men (MSM) who use dating apps have with sending and receiving unsolicited DPs. Analysis of interviews with 25 MSM dating app users in Canada revealed three 'dimensions' of unsolicited DPs (i.e., wanted, typical, and consensual) that indicate users' experiences of receiving such images. Seven factors, including time spent using an MSM dating app and attractiveness of the sender and the DP, had an impact on participants' experiences. Unsolicited DPs may be sent for a variety of reasons, including to compliment the recipient and to coerce them into replying with sexual images. Findings revealed that MSM dating app users feel pressured to enjoy receiving unsolicited DPs and that they may assume other users' willingness to receive sexual images. While I argue that unsolicited DPs are a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence, these findings raise questions about how MSM dating app users have trivialized unsolicited DPs and minimized everyday incidents of sexual violence in their use of dating apps.

Keywords: gay, MSM, dating apps, dick pics, sexual violence

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[3] I am the sole author of this manuscript, which was accepted to the journal *Sexuality & Culture* in February 2021. As such, please note that the title and text of this manuscript (i.e., Chapter 5) may differ from the final publication.

Introduction

Defined as a photo of a penis that is sent without asking if the recipient wants to receive it, the unsolicited dick pic (DP) has been described as a common phenomenon in contemporary online dating culture (Mandau, 2019). Despite unsolicited DPs emerging as a new field of study (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018), much of the research has investigated unsolicited DPs within the contexts of sexual harassment and sexting (Waling & Pym, 2017; Waling et al., 2020).

Within the literature on sexual harassment, DPs are alluded to without being named (Vitis & Gilmour, 2017) and fall under a broad category of what Henry and Powell (2016) referred to as technology-facilitated sexual violence, which includes a range of sexually violent behaviors that are carried out online and in person through the use of technology. Much of the research in this area has focused on the experiences of heterosexual women, though recent studies have begun to explore the experiences of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual or gender minority identities (LGBTQ+) (Dietzel, 2021; Powell et al., 2020).

Unsolicited DPs have also been examined within the context of 'sexting', which is "a term combing the words 'sex and texting' and describes sending sexually suggestive photos or messages through text messages" (Bauermeister et al., 2014, p. 606). Although unsolicited DPs fall under the definition of sexting (Mandau, 2019), the two phenomena are distinct and carry different connotations. Sexting includes the sending and receiving of sexual messages and images (including DPs), while the term 'unsolicited dick pics' solely refers to DPs and emphasizes the fact that the sender did not ask the recipient if they wanted to receive them (Marcotte et al., 2020). As such, the lack of consent from the recipient is a central characteristic of unsolicited DPs (Mandau, 2019) while sexting can be consensual or non-consensual (Krieger, 2017). Research on sexting has focused on the experiences of teenagers and young adults (Dobson, 2017) compared to research on unsolicited DPs, which has not been limited to a particular age

group (Amundsen, 2020). Although some studies have examined sexting practices among men who have sex with men (MSM) (Rice et al., 2012; Bauermeister et al., 2014), much of the sexting literature has explored interactions between heterosexual men and women (Klettke et al., 2014).

Evidence suggests that the experiences MSM have receiving unsolicited DPs differ from those of heterosexual women. First of all, MSM can both send and receive unsolicited DPs, including sending DPs they took of themselves (Waling & Pym, 2017). Women, in contrast, are targeted recipients of DPs (Vitis & Gilmour, 2017). Additionally, sending unsolicited DPs is "a predominantly male phenomenon" without a female equivalent or comparable practice (Oswald et al., 2019, p. 2). Third, a majority of MSM seek casual sexual encounters in their use of dating apps, versus women who tend to seek long-term relationships (Albury et al., 2019). Women generally report negative responses to receiving unsolicited DPs (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018) in comparison to MSM who have more positive reactions (Marcotte et al., 2020; Tziallas, 2015). Despite this, there is a range in MSM dating app users' responses to unsolicited DPs, such that not all MSM dating app users enjoy or appreciate receiving unsolicited DPs (Dietzel, 2021; Marcotte et al., 2020).

There is evidence suggesting that MSM dating app users may have contingent experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. For example, Pingel and colleagues (2013) found that young MSM became desensitized to the sexual nature of MSM dating apps over time. MSM dating app users in Chan's (2018) study took into account the attractiveness of another user and their photos before responding. Same sex attracted participants in Albury and Byron's (2016) study described unsolicited nudes as unwanted when the images were received early in the day or at the beginning of a conversation. Furthermore, alcohol and drug consumption have been shown to increase people's willingness to send and receive sexually explicit images (Yeung et al., 2014;

Dake et al., 2012; Benotsch et al., 2013). Together, these studies suggest that there may be a variety of factors that affect MSM dating app users' experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs.

A few studies shed light on men's motivations for sending unsolicited DPs. One reason that men send unsolicited DPs is to get the recipient's attention (Paasonen et al., 2019), while another reason is because they expect the recipient will reciprocate with nude photos (Oswald et al., 2019). Men may send unsolicited DPs to coerce people into engaging in a sexual interaction with them (March & Wagstaff, 2017) or to exert their power in an attempt to harm the recipient (Vitis & Gilmour, 2017). In contrast, Mandau (2019) found that sending DPs was a way for men to brag about their penis and, subsequently, an attempt to impress and compliment the recipient. Hayes and Dragiewicz (2018) argued that men who send unsolicited DPs may be exhibitionists who are sexually aroused by exposing themselves to another person online. Similarly, Oswald and colleagues (2019) found that men send unsolicited DPs to express their sexual interest in the recipient and to sexually arouse themselves and the recipient.

There is a growing number of studies that examine the phenomenon of unsolicited DPs (Waling et al., 2020) with a consistent call for future research to investigate the experiences of LGBTQ+ dating app users, specifically MSM (Marcotte et al., 2020; Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018). This study aims to address this gap by exploring MSM dating app users' experience receiving and sending unsolicited DPs and the factors that affect their experiences.

Method

This study is part of a larger research project that investigated MSM dating app users' experiences with sexual violence. Data was collected in Autumn 2017 from 25 semi-structured interviews with self-identified MSM dating app users. Participants were recruited for three months using flyers posted at a large Canadian university and in the gay neighborhood of

Montreal, Canada. Snowball sampling was also used in order to encourage participation from local MSM (Corriero & Tong, 2016). Participants were required to be at least 18 years old and did not receive any compensation.

Inspired by Blackwell et al. (2015), participants were offered three interview options (in person, telephone, online) in order to promote participant comfort, accessibility, and anonymity. The majority of participants chose to interview in person, though three were interviewed by phone and three via online chat. Each interview lasted about one hour and was conducted in either English or French. The audio from interviews was recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the text from online interviews was saved. The transcripts from the interviews comprise the data analyzed in this study.

All participants identified as MSM who use dating apps. Twenty-four participants identified as men and one identified as gender-fluid. Twenty-two participants identified as gay, two as queer, and one as bisexual. None of the participants identified as transgender. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 62, with about half of the participants younger than 25 years old. More than half of the participants identified as white, though participants also identified as Middle Eastern, Hispanic, Multiracial, Asian, and Black. The names of the participants presented in this study are pseudonyms.

Grindr was the most used MSM dating app among participants, though they also used other apps and websites, such as Tinder, Scruff, Hornet, and OkCupid. The average amount of time participants had been using dating apps was about four years, though it ranged from one month to eleven years. Participants spent an average of seven hours a week on dating apps and primary used the apps to look for sex, meet people, and seek dates and/or relationships.

Data was analyzed using the phenomenological method, which examines people's experiences and explores how people make meaning of a phenomenon, to attain a broader and

deeper understanding of unsolicited DPs by considering MSM dating app users' social contexts (Adams & van Manen, 2008). Data analysis consisted of an iterative process of reading and re-reading the transcripts to identify passages related to unsolicited DPs. The passages were coded and organized according to themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings

Participants talked about a variety of situations in which they had received unsolicited DPs. Some participants said the images were unwanted, using words like "uncomfortable", "attacked", and "assaulted" to describe their feelings of receiving unsolicited DPs. They also used words like "undesired", "annoying", and "not respectful" to describe the actions of MSM dating app users who had sent such images. Not all participants spoke negatively about unsolicited DPs, however. "Considering I'm there mostly for hooking up, that's totally okay with me. If they are opening up with a dick pic, it's great," said Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black). Other participants were apathetic about receiving unsolicited DPs, such as Mason (26, bisexual, male, Multiracial) who said, "If someone sends me a dick pic, most of the time I am indifferent."

Participants spoke about unsolicited DPs as a standard part of their experiences on MSM dating apps, with many participants saying that they regularly received such images. Michael (18, gay, male, White) said, "If I check my messages every couple of days, I will get at least one, usually more. It's something that I come to expect." Similarly, Robert (23, gay, male, White) said, "you know when you sign on it's going to be part of the experience." For some participants, the names of the dating apps reflected their sexual nature and implied that they could receive sexual images like unsolicited DPs. "It's called Grindr, so I expect it to be full of horny people… it's not something that shocks me, for that reason," explained Hugo (23, queer, male, Hispanic).

Not all participants reported receiving unsolicited DPs frequently on MSM dating apps. William (25, gay, male, White) said that "not too many people" had sent him unsolicited DPs in the year and a half that he used Grindr. In contrast, Ang (36, gay, male, Asian) reported only receiving one unsolicited DP in his ten years of using MSM dating apps and said that it was "because I don't fit the gay male definition of beauty – I am not a white cis-gender male." Robert (23, gay, male, White) did not specify how many he had received, but he expressed frustration with the uncertainty of not knowing if or when he would receive an unsolicited DP: "You never know when you receive a message if it's going to be someone being nice or just a random person sending you a nude picture. You never know what you're going to get."

Many participants said that MSM dating app users would send unsolicited DPs without asking if they wanted to receive such images, and several participants described them as non-consensual. "Obviously, there's no consent in the sense that they didn't ask you if you wanted to see their dick," said Hugo (23, queer, male, Hispanic). Similarly, Oscar (22, gay, male, White) said, "When people send photos straight away, I'm not consenting to receiving explicit photos."

In contrast, other participants felt that being logged into an MSM dating app indicated their openness to receiving sexual advances and unsolicited DPs from other users. "If you're a member of the site, then it [consent] is implied," explained Joe (31, gay, male, White). Ravi (28, gay, male, Middle Eastern) felt that the sexual nature of MSM dating apps contributed to the assumption that other users want to receive unsolicited DPs. "The culture of the application is giving the idea that we consent already." said Ravi.

Some participants were less sure about how consensual or non-consensual it was to receive an unsolicited DP. Logan (18, gay, male, White) said that "consent is definitely sketchy on Grindr because of all the unsolicited messages" but he did not consider receiving unsolicited DPs as a severe offense. "I don't feel like I'm being assaulted, but I do feel like they should've

asked," explained Logan. Both Toby (20, gay, male, White) and Dion (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern) were unsure if sending or receiving unsolicited DPs was consensual. "I don't know if sending a dick pic is consensual or not," said Dion. "I actually don't know."

Adding more nuance to participants' experiences

As they discussed unsolicited DPs, participants gave more nuance to their experiences. Some participants said that sending and receiving unsolicited DPs was typical in MSM dating app culture, but they did not like it when other users sent them such images. Said Michael (18, gay, male, White), "I think if they were up to me, they wouldn't happen. But some people obviously respond positively because, if they didn't, I don't think people would do it at all." There were other participants who similarly said that sending and receiving unsolicited DPs was a common practice among MSM dating app users, but they felt indifferent when it happened to them. "I knew I would be getting dick pics on Grindr, so I wasn't terribly uncomfortable with it," said William (25, gay, male, White). Hugo (23, queer, male, Hispanic) agreed: "It has become normalized. Even if you don't want it, you're just like 'whatever'."

Some participants were not sure that all MSM dating app users would consider unsolicited DPs to be a standard part of their app experience. Skyler (28, queer, male, White) argued that the images were "only semi-normalized" because there are users who do not enjoy receiving them:

> I think there's enough people who object to it or at least don't love it or don't appreciate
> it. There aren't enough people who object to it or don't appreciate it to keep it from being
> fully normalized, but it's normalized enough.

Like Skyler, Oscar (22, gay, male, White) said that it was important to differentiate between how he felt about receiving unsolicited DPs and how other MSM dating app users felt:

I know no one will agree with me, but I've looked at non-consensual as getting photos immediately. I don't see that as normal, but a lot of people – everyone on the app – feel that it's [the app] for that specific purpose.

A few participants stated that sending unsolicited DPs was indicative of the sexual nature of MSM dating apps, and that recipients of such images may not have consented to receive them. "It [Grindr] allows people to meet up and have hook-ups, which I think is part of the point. But then, within that same platform, it also allows for these non-consensual acts," explained William (25, gay, male, White). Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black) also recognized the tension between expected behaviors and individual users' feelings. "Unsolicited dick pics is something that is normalized but is not necessarily consensual," said Jadyn.

Participants made clear distinctions between how consensual and how wanted unsolicited DPs were in their interactions with other MSM dating app users. Elijah (18, gay, male, White) was confident that unsolicited DPs were non-consensual "by definition" but admitted that he sometimes wanted to receive them. Mason (26, bisexual, male, Multiracial) did not like using the term "non-consensual" to describe his experience of receiving unsolicited DPs, saying that he preferred to refer to them as "unwanted". Hugo (23, queer, male, Hispanic) said it was "not a big deal" for him to receive an unsolicited DP but remarked that some users "would probably not want that or feel uncomfortable" and, for them, unsolicited DPs "would be non-consensual."

Other participants similarly differentiated between how consensual and how wanted unsolicited DPs were in their experiences, while also taking into account how common it was for MSM dating app users to send such images to one another. Dion (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern) said that he expected to receive unsolicited DPs on MSM dating apps and emphasized that he experienced them as non-consensual and unwanted: "The random sending of unrequired photos, that would be non-consensual. You get used to it because it comes with using the app, but you'd

rather that it didn't." Robert (23, gay, male, White) asserted that sending and receiving unsolicited DPs was a routine practice among MSM dating app users, even though he did not consent to receive them or want to receive them: "I never gave consent to receive those pictures, but it's normalized. They're both at the same time: non-consensual and normalized. Everybody does it, but I still don't want that."

Joe's (31, gay, male, White) opinion of unsolicited DPs changed during his interview. At first, he said that MSM should be open to receiving unsolicited DPs since they consented to using MSM dating apps and since sending unsolicited DPs was known as a common practice among users. Later in the interview, however, Joe compared sending and receiving unsolicited DPs to the "the chicken and the egg" scenario:

> What comes first? I'm making it so different steps come first. I'm saying that if you are a member of Grindr, then you need to consent to dick pics, because people send dick pics. But what if we swapped that and say, if you are a member of Grindr then you cannot send dick pics, because people do not consent to them? If many people using this app don't want unsolicited dick pics, then who's to say this should be a normalized behavior?

Factors that affected participants' experiences

As they talked about their experiences, participants described different factors that had an impact on how they felt receiving unsolicited DPs. For example, some participants explained that the timing of when they received an unsolicited DP in their chat with another MSM dating app user made a difference to their experience. "The earlier the dick pic comes, the less I'm willing to see it," said Mason (26, bisexual, male, Multiracial). Noah (28, gay male, White) found unsolicited DPs "too direct" and "imposing" when he received them right away, saying that he appreciated "having a short discussion" with a user before receiving a DP. Similarly, William (25, gay, male, White) said there was "a certain amount of engagement that needs to happen"

before he felt comfortable receiving a DP: "Even if your intention is only to hook up, you want to ease into a conversation." For these participants, a greeting or a brief conversation made them feel more receptive to an unsolicited DP. "Let's say he sends five photos of his cock or his ass without anything, I won't reply. But if there's a decent, 'Hi, how are you?' and a photo, I will make sure I reply," said Dion (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern). Toby (20, gay, male, White), however, thought it was "ridiculous" that MSM dating app users would be more comfortable receiving an unsolicited DP after exchanging a few messages. "What difference does three different lines of convo make, between sending a dick pic or whatever?" asked Toby.

For some participants, the longer they had used MSM dating apps, the more banal unsolicited DPs became. "I'm really unmoved now. I used to be really shocked when I was at the beginning, in my early stages of usage in the apps," said Theo (20, gay, gender-fluid, Multiracial). Ravi (28, gay, male, Middle Eastern) similarly found unsolicited DPs less arousing after using MSM dating apps for six years. "I'm not excited to see them anymore because I have seen so many," said Ravi. Dion (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern), who had been using MSM dating apps for four years, agreed: "I have become kind of become immune or numb to it." Although he had become more comfortable receiving unsolicited DPs after a year of using MSM dating apps, Logan (18, gay, male, White) felt conflicted about getting used to people sending him unsolicited DPs: "It's kind of fucked up that it doesn't bother me. Someone is sexually exposing themselves without me asking, but it sort of just seems normal now in the context."

There were participants who talked about their mood having an impact on how they felt receiving unsolicited DPs. Hugo (23, queer, male, Hispanic) explained, "if I'm in a lazy mood, I'll probably make a joke about it or be like, 'Nice try.' If I'm busy, I will probably block the profile." For Oscar (22, gay, male, White), the word 'mood' was a euphemism for sexual arousal, saying that the more "in the mood" he was, the more willing he was to receive an unsolicited DP.

Both Elijah (18, gay, male, White) and Gabriel (21, gay, male, White) explained that if they were "horny", then they would be happy to receive unsolicited DPs.

Participants' reasons for using MSM dating apps also contributed to their experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. Ravi (28, gay, male, Middle Eastern) emphasized that he did not like receiving unsolicited DPs if he was "chilling on a Thursday night and having a glass of wine and just looking to chat with people." Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black) reported having different reactions to unsolicited DPs when he was looking for casual sex compared to when he was looking for a relationship. "If I am in dating mode and have a cute picture and am looking to date, getting random unsolicited dick pics, that can be viewed as harassment," said Jadyn.

Many participants reported that attractiveness made a difference in how they felt about unsolicited DPs. Dion (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern) said it could either be a "good outcome" or "bad outcome" depending on the attractiveness of the sender and the DP: "If it's a photo that I find nice, it could be positive. But if it's a photo that I think is not nice, it would be a negative interaction." Charlie (24, gay, male, White) admitted that his reaction to unsolicited DPs depended on the attractiveness of the DP. "If it's nice, sometimes I'll compliment them," said Charlie. Other participants talked about ignoring the sender's advances, deleting the chat, or blocking the user – unless they found the person or the DP attractive. "I cut the conversation clear, unless the person is so hot that I can't resist," said Ravi (28, gay, male, Middle Eastern). Similarly, Toby (20, gay, male, White) said, "If I haven't spoken to them and they send me a dick pic, I don't feel inclined to respond – unless I'm attracted to it." Elijah (18, gay, male, White) recognized that the attractiveness of the DP affected his reaction and explained, "I'm not proud of it, I know that it's contradictory, but that's honestly the way it is for me."

Reasons for sending unsolicited dick pics

Participants gave a few reasons for why MSM dating app users send unsolicited DPs, including to get the recipient's attention. "Often, people start a conversation with nudes to get your attention," said Toby (20, gay, male, White). Michael (18, gay, male, White) agreed: "They think it'll get people's attention because nude imagery is attention grabbing." Participants also said that unsolicited DPs were meant to inform the receipt about the sender's physical attributes. "The reason I share is because I would like to see what I'm going to end up with. It's more about being open and transparent and honest," said Karam (46, gay, male, Middle Eastern). Ravi (28, gay, male, Middle Eastern) similarly found unsolicited DPs informative: "It's just to show the person that this is you. This is how you look like from the side, from the angles, from the back."

Participants said that MSM dating app users send unsolicited DPs in an effort to impress other users and try to persuade them into engaging in sexual activity. "I think people send it out because they want to entice you to sleep with them," said Robert (23, gay, male, White). Nicolas (62, gay, male, Multiracial) explained:

> They'll send you a picture of their penis to brag on how well-endowed they are. And usually, it has to do with what they feel will entice you. Because, don't forget, they are approaching me, and they want to convince me. They are trying to advertise… they're trying to put their best foot forward to entice me into meeting with them.

> Several participants, including Elijah (18, gay, male, White), identified sexual arousal as a reason why MSM dating app users send unsolicited DPs. "I'm really horny, sometimes I'll send one of those," said Elijah. Charlie (24, gay, male, White) talked about friends of his who were exhibitionists and enjoyed sending unsolicited DPs for their own pleasure. Joe (31, gay, male, White) said that he would send unsolicited DPs when he was looking for sex, but that it was not

something he would do regularly "It's only when I've reached a certain point of how long it's been since I've last been with a man," explained Joe.

Participants reported that MSM dating app users send unsolicited DPs in order to coax other users into replying with DPs of their own. "They send one and they always expect one in return," said Robert (23, gay, male, White). Participants also talked about feeling pressured or obligated to reply with their own DPs, even when they were uninterested in the other MSM dating app user. "Sometimes if they send me their photos first, even if I don't want it to continue, I'll send mine back as a tit-for-tat," said Joe (31, gay, male, White).

Participants said that time of day, drug and alcohol consumption, and feelings of loneliness factored into MSM dating app users' reasons for sending unsolicited DPs. "At 3 AM when everybody's drunk, that's when the most dick pics happen. But at 1 PM, nobody is going to send me a dick pic. Usually, it's later in the evening when people are lonely," said Robert (23, gay, male, White). Dion (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern) asserted that MSM who use dating apps in order to find other MSM who like consuming drugs during sex – a practice referred to a 'PnP' ('Party and Play') – these MSM dating app users send unsolicited DPs because they are "high and very horny and looking for lots of sex."

Lastly, many participants said that MSM dating app users would send unsolicited DPs as a means of assessing another user's interest in chatting with them. "When someone is sending you a picture, he's trying to ask you, 'Are you attracted to me?'" said Nicholas (62, gay, male, Multiracial). For Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black), sending unsolicited DPs was helpful in gauging another user's willingness to chat. "In this world of applications, we're trying to message each other and find out if people are interested," said Jadyn. Michael (18, gay, male, White) talked about going through a process of "trial and error" of sending unsolicited DPs in order to figure out an "effective strategy" for engaging other users. In fact, several participants found it

challenging to know if sending unsolicited DPs would help or hurt their chances of connecting with other MSM dating app users. Said Pierre (25, gay, male, White), "It's difficult to know when to be direct or not direct. There's a tension between the two."

Participant reflections

As they talked about their experiences sending and receiving unsolicited DPs, participants considered how their experiences would compare to other people's experiences. For example, William (25, gay, male, White), who thought that unsolicited DPs were "socially awkward", said that people who were new to MSM dating apps may imitate other users' behaviors instead of doing what makes them comfortable: "If you don't have as much experience with your own and other people's sexuality, then you might base yourself more off of social scripts and because of that, you might have a greater tendency to go towards normalized behaviours." Dion (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern) said that people who were unfamiliar with the culture of MSM dating apps would be surprised by how common it is to receive an unsolicited DP:

> Some friends, whether straight or gay friends who don't use the apps, they would be shocked if they see a dick or an ass. You know, just a random photo. Whereas, for me, it's kind of normal because it's part of my interaction with other gay people on the apps.

Some participants differentiated between the practices of heterosexual dating app users and MSM dating app users while reflecting on their experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. Said Toby (20, gay, male, White), "I don't think in mainstream culture it's been normalized but the etiquette within Grindr users, yeah, it's become routine." Robert (23, gay, male, White) expressed frustration in how society expected MSM to respond to unsolicited DPs, particularly when compared to heterosexual women:

I've never met a girl that's like, "Oh, I *love* receiving dick pics!" For guys, it's weird

saying no. It's almost that we cannot say no because, "Why would he not like it?" I think

we have more pressure to accept it because we're guys.

As such, Robert (23, gay, male, White) asserted that it would be challenging for an MSM dating

app user to admit feeling uncomfortable receiving an unsolicited DP: "Everybody thinks that gay

guys always want sex, so people feel more comfortable sending pictures because they think

everybody is going to like it, especially if it's a nice dick."

Participants also considered how they felt receiving unsolicited DPs on apps compared to

how they would feel experiencing similar sexual advances in person. "If you flash someone on

the street, that's non-consensual and its illegal. On Grindr, its non-consensual but it just makes

you roll your eyes," said Logan (18, gay, male, White). Joe (31, gay, male, White) also likened

receiving unsolicited DPs to flashing as he reflected on his experiences: "I don't mind being sent

an unsolicited dick pic in the same way I would mind being flashed in public. What behaviors we

consent to change whether it's in virtual or 3D space." Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black) asserted that

the affordances of the internet allow MSM to comport themselves differently on dating apps than

in person. "Obviously, someone does not walk up to you in a bar, pull down their pants, and

show you their dick. People say or do things online that in real life you would never do," said

Jadyn. Logan agreed (18, gay, male, White): "Unsolicited nudes – that just doesn't happen in real

life, but on Grindr it happens so much that it's normal."

Discussion

An analysis of participants' experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs revealed three

'dimensions' of unsolicited DPs: wanted, typical, and consensual. The dimension 'wanted'

describes the extent to which an MSM dating app user desires, and is willing to receive,

unsolicited DPs. The dimension 'typical' refers to the extent to which it is standard and common for an MSM dating app user to receive unsolicited DPs. The dimension 'consensual' denotes the extent to which an MSM app user consents to receiving unsolicited DPs. These three dimensions, each of which exists on a continuum, capture MSM dating app users' experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs such that unsolicited DPs can be more or less wanted, more or less typical, and more or less consensual. For example, unsolicited DPs may be typical of one user's experience and atypical of another user's experience. Similarly, MSM dating app users may experience some unsolicited DPs as wanted (or unwanted) and others as consensual (or non-consensual).

These three dimensions intersect such that MSM dating app users can simultaneously experience unsolicited DPs on a continuum according to how wanted, typical, and consensual they are (see Figure 1). An MSM dating app user may describe feeling indifferent to receiving an unsolicited DP (the

Figure 1. The three dimensions of unsolicited dick pics.
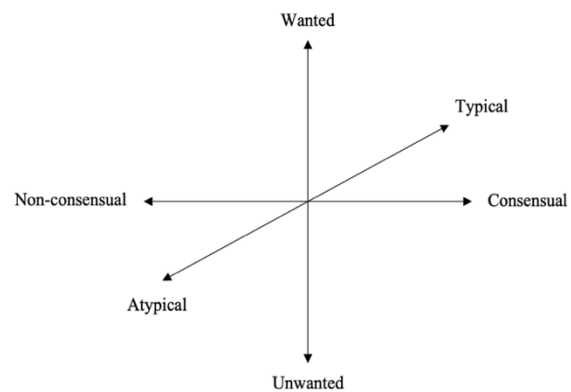
'wanted' dimension) and note that another user sent it without first asking them (the 'consensual' dimension), but consider the experience banal because they often receive unsolicited DPs on MSM dating apps (the 'typical' dimension). These three dimensions capture a range of MSM dating app users' experiences with unsolicited DPs and build on previous research, which had characterized unsolicited DPs in terms of desire, expectations, and harassment (Waling & Pym, 2017; Paasonen et al., 2019; Mandau, 2019; Amundsen, 2020). Findings from this study show the diversity of MSM dating app users' experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs and demonstrate that MSM dating app users have complex – and sometimes conflicting or contradictory – reactions to receiving unsolicited DPs.

Data analysis revealed several factors that can affect MSM dating app users' experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. These factors are: (1) the timing of when in a chat the unsolicited DP is received; (2) the amount of time the recipient has been using MSM dating apps; (3) the mood of the recipient, including their level of sexual arousal; (4) the recipient's reasons for using MSM dating apps, such as looking for sex or for dates; and (5) the attractiveness of the person sending the unsolicited DP and/or the attractiveness of the DP itself. Participants also stated that time of day, drug and alcohol consumption, and feelings of loneliness had an impact on MSM dating app users' motivations for sending unsolicited DPs. Since feelings of loneliness can be categorized under the factor 'mood', there are two additional factors that can affect MSM dating app users' experiences: (6) the time of day when the unsolicited DP is received; and (7) the consumption of drugs and/or alcohol. These findings indicate that different factors can have an impact on MSM dating app users' experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. These findings align with previous research, which had suggested that MSM dating app users may respond differently to receiving unwanted sexual images depending on how long they had been using MSM dating apps (Pingel et al., 2013), the attractiveness of dating app users and their photos (Chan, 2018), the time of day and timing in a conversation (Albury & Byron, 2016), and the consumption of drugs or alcohol (Yeung et al., 2014; Dake et al., 2012; Benotsch et al., 2013).

More research needs to be done to understand the effects that these seven factors can have on MSM dating app users' experiences, especially given the limited number of participants in this qualitative study, though findings suggest that there may be correlations between these factors and MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited DPs. For example, it appears that there is a positive correlation between these factors and how much MSM dating app users want to receive unsolicited DPs, such that the longer an MSM dating app user has been using dating apps or the more 'in the mood' they are, the more willing they are to

receive an unsolicited DP. These seven factors also seem to correspond to how typical it is for

MSM dating app users to send unsolicited DPs, such that the later in the day it is or the more

drugs and alcohol the user has consumed, the more routine it is to send unsolicited DPs.

That said, there does not seem to be a correlation between these seven factors and the

'consensual' dimension of unsolicited DPs. While some participants said that unsolicited DPs

were always non-consensual, others conceptualized unsolicited DPs as non-consensual but

experienced them with varying levels of consent and, notably, described having more consensual

experiences when the sender or the DP was more attractive. While it is possible that some

participants may have confused consent with desire, they did specify that the attractiveness of the

sender impacted the extent to which they experienced an unsolicited DP as consensual. These

findings suggest that the extent to which MSM dating app users consent to receiving unsolicited

DPs may be unique to each individual and related to how they define and practice consent.

Many participants explained that sending and receiving unsolicited DPs was a routine,

expected, and common practice among MSM dating app users. This finding is not surprising

since unsolicited DPs have been framed as a standard part of online dating (Mandau, 2019) and

MSM dating apps have a reputation for being highly sexual spaces (Race, 2015). The fact that

participants described unsolicited DPs as ordinary and banal suggests that sending and receiving

unsolicited DPs can be understood as a social norm among MSM dating app users. In fact, recent

action taken by Grindr also suggests that unsolicited DPs are considered as a social norm among

MSM dating apps.[4] That said, participants noted a tension between the assumption that MSM

dating app users send and receive unsolicited DPs and the reality that not all MSM dating app

users have sent or received such images. Thus, the question arises as to whether sending and

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[4] In Summer 2019, Grindr updated its software to include an option for users to indicate on their profile their
willingness to receive "NSFW Pics" (Dietzel, 2021; Grindr, 2020).

receiving unsolicited DPs is a perceived norm or an actual norm (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977) in MSM dating app culture.

Findings from this study suggest that sending and receiving unsolicited DPs is a perceived norm of MSM dating app culture since not all participants sent unsolicited DPs and some participants rarely received any. The perception that all MSM dating app users often receive numerous unsolicited DPs is further challenged when taking into consideration participants' identities. Data from this study suggests that MSM dating app users who are older or racialized receive fewer unsolicited DPs than MSM dating app users who are young or white. While not conclusive, this finding is supported by Han and Choi's (2018) hierarchy of gay male desire, which states that MSM with socially desirable identities, such as MSM who are white, receive more attention and are viewed as more attractive than MSM who are racialized. The small sample size and qualitative nature of this study make it difficult to conclude if, or how, identity has an impact on the quantity and frequency of unsolicited DPs received. This study did reveal that, contrary to how unsolicited DPs have been framed in popular culture and in previous studies (e.g., Vitis & Gilmour, 2017), not all MSM dating app users send unsolicited DPs and the quantity and frequency of unsolicited DPs received varies among MSM dating app users.

Participants also talked about the assumption that all MSM dating app users enjoy receiving unsolicited DPs and asserted that MSM who express discomfort or disinterest in unsolicited DPs would be viewed negatively. This finding supports Hollway's (1988) male sexual drive discourse, which states that men are expected to pursue and want sex and, subsequently, that men always consent to sex. MSM dating app users who operate with this mentality may send unsolicited DPs without hesitation or concern because they expect other MSM dating app users to be interested in and consent to their sexual advances. Similarly, MSM dating app users may feel pressured to respond positively to an unsolicited DPs to conform to the

male sexual drive discourse and the social norms of MSM dating app culture. This means that MSM dating app users may condone non-consensual sexual advances because of the assumptions that all MSM dating app users send unsolicited DPs and that all MSM enjoy receiving them.

Participants reported that MSM dating app users had sent them unsolicited DPs in order to coax them into replying with DPs of their own. Therefore, sending unsolicited DPs appears to be a tactic that MSM dating app users employ to coerce other MSM into engaging in sexual activity with them. Online sexual coercion such as this falls under what Henry and Powell (2016) described as technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV), a range of behaviors in which technology is used to facilitate sexual harm against other people. In addition to coercion, TFSV includes other incidents such as imaged-based sexual abuse and sexual harassment (Henry & Powell, 2018) – language that was also present in participants' descriptions of unsolicited DPs. Together, these findings indicate that unsolicited DPs are a form of TSFV on MSM dating apps.

However, the reputation and culture of MSM dating apps as sexual spaces (Race, 2015) coupled with the diversity of user expectations and goals (Albury et al., 2019), creates a situation in which users may have difficulty in deciphering who is online for what and, consequently, what may be experienced as sexual violence. For the MSM dating app users who are online for sexual purposes, an unsolicited DP may be welcome and sexually arousing. For other MSM, who are online to pass the time, explore their sexuality, or look for dates, an unsolicited DP may be unwelcome, harassing, and non-consensual. Additionally, since sending unsolicited DPs was identified as a way for users to get another user's attention, asses their interest, and find out if, or to what extent, the recipient would like to engage, unsolicited DPs may be intended as a compliment or as a means of opening a conversation towards a more sexual interaction. As such, the unsolicited DP may be an online, sexual version of 'peacocking' (Strauss, 2005) – flaunting one's assets to a potential mate, communicating (sexual) desire, and asking them to return the

gesture if they're interested. Granted, this does not dismiss or excuse the fact that MSM dating app users may experience unsolicited DPs as sexual violence; rather, this suggests that MSM dating app users have trivialized this sexual advance and minimized the possibility that other users experience unsolicited DPs as a form of TFSV.

More work needs to be done to better understand incidents of TFSV like unsolicited DPs on MSM dating apps. Since the majority of participants identified as young and white and since findings suggested that age and race could affect MSM dating app users' experiences, a more diverse sample of MSM dating app users would allow for a more in-depth investigation of how identity has an impact on users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited DPs. Similarly, with a larger sample size of MSM dating app users, future research could examine correlations between the three dimensions of unsolicited DPs and the seven factors that can affect users' experiences. Future research could also explore how differences in MSM dating app use, such as the number of years using MSM dating apps and the frequency of use, may correspond to shifts in the three dimensions of unsolicited DPs. Participants in this study reported feeling pressured to accept and pursue sexual activity, which speaks to issues of sexual consent practices among MSM. Future studies should investigate how MSM dating app users conceptualize and practice consent in their online and in-person interactions with other MSM. Lastly, it would be beneficial to study the experiences of other LGBTQ+ dating app users, such as women who have sex with women and trans and gender diverse people, to explore unwanted sexual advances and TFSV in other LGBTQ+ populations. By raising awareness to issues of sexual violence and exploring the differences between the perceived and actual social norms in contemporary online dating culture, app companies and users can learn how to prevent and address non-consensual sexual advances from happening on dating apps.

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Bridging Statement

In Chapter 5, I addressed Objective 3 of my dissertation: to engage in Study 2 focused on unwanted sexual images sent and received by men who have sex with men (MSM) dating app users. In the manuscript titled, *The three dimensions of unsolicited dick pics: MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics*, I investigated the phenomenon of unsolicited "dick pics" (DPs), a colloquial term that refers to a photo of a penis that is sent without the consent of the recipient. Through a phenomenological analysis of MSM dating app users' experiences, I examined the ways in which MSM trivialize and minimize technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Findings from Study 2 in Chapter 5 revealed that unsolicited DPs are a form of sexual violence that MSM experience when interacting with other MSM dating app users online. However, not all MSM dating app users believe that receiving unsolicited DPs is problematic, non-consensual, or sexually violent. In fact, some participants described wanting to receive such images and actively welcomed them from other users. Other participants were unsure or undecided about the extent to which sending and receiving of unsolicited DPs is non-consensual, and many participants described different factors that could affect their experience receiving such images. Findings revealed that factors including attractiveness, mood, and time of day could alter how MSM dating app users felt when receiving unsolicited DPs – meaning that MSM were willing to disregard their concerns about the non-consensual nature of unsolicited DPs in pursuit of sexual excitement. Findings also revealed that MSM excuse themselves and others who send unsolicited DPs, dismissing the act as a trivial albeit unwanted practice that has become commonplace in the culture of MSM dating apps. The Chapter 5 study suggests that MSM dating app users have minimized and condoned unsolicited DPs as an everyday incident of online sexual violence.

In light of this conclusion, many questions emerge. What proportion of the MSM dating app user population has minimized and condoned unsolicited DPs? How has minimizing this form of sexual violence affected MSM dating app users' intimate and sexual relationships? What other acts of sexual violence have MSM dating app users experienced, and potentially minimized or normalized, online and in person? What strategies and methods do MSM dating app users employ to mitigate concerns of sexual violence and protect themselves from different forms of sexual violence? How might app companies, community organizations, government agencies, and others intervene to educate MSM dating app users about different forms of sexual violence? While it is not within the scope of this dissertation to address all of these questions, Study 3 in upcoming Chapter 6 aims to begin this investigation by examining MSM dating app users' experiences of sexual violence and how they have trivialized sexual violence online and in person. I do so by researching manifestations of rape culture that MSM experience through their use of dating apps.

Rape culture has been defined as:

[T]he way in which sexist societal attitudes and language tacitly condone, minimize and/or normalize sexual violence, mostly against women, but also against other genders through institutions, communities and individuals. (Shariff, 2017, p. 56)

Rape culture examines the cultures and systems rooted in different levels of society to scrutinize how sexual violence has been condoned and perpetuated (Henry & Powell, 2014). Rather than examining a specific incident of sexual violence – as I did with unsolicited DPs in Study 2 – in the final study, Study 3, which is presented in Chapter 6, I examine MSM's beliefs about sexual violence and how those beliefs are embedded in the norms of dating apps and, consequently, contribute to a rape culture.

Chapter 6 contains my manuscript reporting Study 3 on manifestations or rape culture. The manuscript, entitled, *"That's straight-up rape culture": Manifestations of rape culture on Grindr*, details my findings from an analysis of the MSM Interviews (see Chapter 1). In Study 3, I conducted a thematic analysis to examine how MSM understand and experience rape culture through their use of dating apps.

CHAPTER 6: STUDY 3

"That's straight-up rape culture": Manifestations of rape culture on Grindr[5]

Abstract

Rape culture, described as when "violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent" (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993, p. vii), exists online and offline (Henry & Powell, 2014). Much of the research on rape culture focuses on the experiences of heterosexual women, and few studies have explored rape culture in the context of dating apps. This chapter explores how men who have sex with men (MSM) understand and experience rape culture through their use of Grindr and similar dating apps. A thematic analysis of interviews with 25 MSM dating app users revealed problematic user behavior as well as unwanted sexual messages and images as common manifestations of rape culture on dating apps. Participants explained that rape culture extends beyond in-app interactions to in-person encounters, as evident by incidents of sexual violence that several participants had experienced and one participant had committed. Participants were unsure about the extent to which MSM dating apps facilitate rape culture but asserted that some apps enable rape culture more than others. This chapter demonstrates the importance of investigating sexual violence against people of diverse gender and sexual identities to ensure their experiences are not minimized, ignored, or rendered invisible.

Keywords: Rape culture; sexual violence; dating apps; gay; queer; MSM

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[5] I am the sole author of this manuscript, which is published as a chapter in *The Emerald International Handbook of Technology-facilitated Violence and Abuse*. This book was compiled and edited by Dr. Jane Bailey, Dr. Asher Flynn, and Dr. Nicola Henry, and is available beginning April 2021.

Introduction

During the 1970s, second-wave feminists began critiquing myths about women and sexual violence and introduced the term "rape culture" to articulate how society normalizes and condones sexual violence (Brownmiller, 1975). Since then, scholars, activists, and others have conceptualized rape culture as "the social, cultural, and structural discourses and practices in which sexual violence is tolerated, accepted, eroticized, minimized and trivialized" (Henry & Powell, 2014, p. 2). In a rape culture, there are blurred lines around consent, male sexual aggression is accepted and encouraged, and victims are blamed for the violence they have suffered (Phipps, Ringrose, Renold, & Jackson, 2018; Sills et al., 2016). Perpetrators are excused, and sexual violence is rendered acceptable, attractive, and inevitable (Keller, Mendes, & Ringrose, 2018; Smith, 2004).

One of the most cited definitions of rape culture comes from Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth (1993, p. vii) in their book, *Transforming A Rape Culture*:

It is a complex set of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm.

Consistent with other authors, Buchwald et al. (1993) describe rape culture as the ideologies and systems that have normalized and condoned sexual violence. They explain that sexual violence exists on a continuum that includes harassment, coercion, threats, and emotional and physical harm (see also Kelly, 1988). This notion of rape culture, however, presents a challenge when considering the systems and practices that trivialize and perpetuate sexual violence against people of diverse genders and sexualities, such as men who have sex with men

(MSM), women who have sex with women, and trans and gender diverse people. Problematizing – or queering – rape culture in this way exposes the fact that rape culture is a heteronormative concept framed as sexual violence that men perpetrate against women. When we conceptualize rape culture in heteronormative terms, MSM are implicated without being affected. MSM participate in systems and practices that normalize and condone sexual violence against women but are not recognized as targets of such violence. However, if we consider rape culture in broader terms – without restricting the normalization and condonation of sexual violence in society to people of a particular gender or sexuality – then the concept can also apply to MSM.

It is not within the scope of this chapter to scrutinize the various definitions of rape culture or to propose a new conceptualization sensitive to people of diverse genders and sexualities. Rather, I have adopted Shariff's (2017, p. 56) definition of rape culture: "the way in which sexist societal attitudes and language tacitly condone, minimize and/or normalize sexual violence, mostly against women, but also against other genders through institutions, communities and individuals."

This aim of this chapter is to explore how MSM understand and experience rape culture through their use of Grindr and similar dating apps. There are several reasons why it is useful to investigate these experiences. First, MSM are avid users of dating apps. Grindr, the most popular of the MSM dating apps (Badal, Stryker, DeLuca, & Purcell, 2018), recently reported that it has 3.8 million daily active users worldwide (Clement, 2019). Second, MSM dating apps are highly sexualized spaces (Race, 2015), and MSM may feel pressured or expected to engage in sexual activity even if they do not want to (Gavey, Schmidt, Braun, Fenaughty, & Eremin, 2009; Klesse, 2016). Third, MSM may dismiss or trivialize their experiences with sexual violence because of the assumption that men always want sex (Hollway, 1998). Although MSM dating apps are highly sexualized spaces, MSM actually use the apps for a variety of reasons, including to

socialize and pass the time (Albury et al., 2019). This means that MSM may presume all dating app users want to engage in sexual activities even though some users may not be interested in anything sexual, thereby creating the possibility for unwanted sexual advances. Lastly, there are high rates of sexual violence against MSM (Rothman, Exner, & Baughman, 2011), and MSM dating app users are concerned about experiencing sexual violence through their use of dating apps (Corriero & Tong, 2016). Thus, in order to investigate manifestations of rape culture against MSM, it is beneficial to explore their experiences with dating apps.

This chapter presents findings from an empirical study conducted with 25 MSM dating app users. Applying thematic analysis to the interview data, I found that participants talked about a variety of user behaviors indicative of rape culture, including imposing, aggressive, assumptive, and coercive behavior. Participants identified unwanted sexual messages and unwanted sexual images as two common manifestations of rape culture on dating apps and discussed how rape culture extends from in-app interactions to in-person encounters. Several participants disclosed that they had experienced sexual violence from MSM dating app users and one participant admitted that he had committed an act of sexual violence. Participants also reflected on the ways in which apps facilitate rape culture, though there was not consensus among participants regarding the extent to which dating app companies should be held accountable. I discuss the challenges in addressing rape culture and sexual violence against MSM, while also considering the sexual norms of MSM communities and the unique positionality of MSM as perpetrators and victims of sexual violence. The chapter closes with a call to (re)conceptualize rape culture so that definitions and understandings take into consideration the unique experiences of people with diverse gender and sexual identities.

Manifestations of Rape Culture

Rape culture manifests across society, including in law, medicine, education, and media (Dietzel, 2019; Phillips, 2016; Shariff, Dietzel, & Jaswal, 2017). Institutions such as these excuse perpetrators, fail to offer adequate support or resources to survivors, and contribute to social structures that perpetuate gender inequality and violence (Buchwald et al., 1993; Burt, 1980; Henry & Powell, 2014). These macrolevel manifestations illustrate how sexual violence has been condoned and trivialized in society, further evident by the high rates of sexual violence against women and MSM (Cotter & Savage, 2019; Rothman et al., 2011). However, rape culture is also present at the microlevel, such as when individuals blame victims for the sexual violence they have suffered or make jokes about sexual assault and rape (Henry & Powell, 2014). Of course, these manifestations reflect societal structures, gendered power relations, inequality, and social ideologies that condone and trivialize sexual violence against women.

Rape culture also manifests online. In some cases, rape culture is reproduced in virtual spaces; people in online communities perpetuate rape myths and trivialize sexual violence (Phipps et al., 2018; Stubbs-Richardson, Rader, & Cosby, 2018). In other cases, technology creates new problems, such as the non-consensual distribution of intimate images and videos (Powell, Henry, & Flynn, 2018). Although most of the research investigating rape culture online has focused on the experiences of heterosexual women and girls (e.g., Henry & Powell, 2014; Keller et al., 2018), these studies still offer a valuable starting point to explore how rape culture can manifest in the experiences of MSM. Like women (Cama, 2021), MSM are targets of male sexual aggression, can be exploited and coerced into engaging in unwanted sexual acts, are often blamed for the sexual violence a perpetrator has committed against them, and may not be believed or taken seriously when they disclose or report an incident of sexual violence (Braun, Schmidt, Gavey, & Fenaughty, 2009; Davies, 2002; Gavey, 2005). Similar to women, MSM face

rape myths and stereotypes that serve to silence their experiences of sexual violence (Mortimer, Powell, & Sandy, 2019). Moreover, concerning manifestations of rape culture online, women and MSM both experience high rates of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Powell, Scott, Flynn, & Henry, 2020).

Technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) is an umbrella term that refers to a range of behaviors in which technology is "used to facilitate both virtual and face-to-face sexually based harms" (Henry & Powell, 2016, p. 1). TFSV includes image-based sexual abuse, psychological violence, sexual harassment, coercion, cyberstalking, threats, hate speech, and the use of digital technologies to commit sexual violence in person (Henry & Powell, 2014). One example is online sexual harassment, or cyber-sexual harassment, which refers to unwanted or unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature (Biber, Doverspike, Baznik, Cober, & Ritter, 2002; Ritter, 2014; Schenk, 2008), including unwanted sexual attention and uninvited sexual advances (Van Royen, Vandebosch, & Poels, 2015). People may also use an online space to make threats of sexual violence against someone and then share their personal details in an effort to encourage others to commit violence against them (Fairbairn, 2015; Powell & Henry, 2017).

One of the most common experiences of TFSV is image-based sexual abuse (IBSA). IBSA is "the non-consensual creation of nude or sexual images, the non-consensual distribution of those intimate images, and the threat of distributing intimate images" (Powell et al., 2018, p. 306). Sometimes referred to as "revenge porn," IBSA occurs when a perpetrator seeks status, money, retribution, or personal enjoyment (Powell et al., 2018). IBSA refers to a range of behaviors, including voyeurism (i.e., sharing sexual images for sexual pleasure), sextortion (i.e., trying to obtain money, sexual images, or sexual acts by threatening the dissemination of sexual images), and sexual assault image sharing (i.e., distributing images or videos of a victim of sexual assault or rape) (see Powell & Henry, 2017).

Research has shown that MSM experience high rates of IBSA compared to heterosexual people. Henry, Powell, and Flynn (2017) found that 39% of MSM reported being victims of IBSA compared to 21% of heterosexual people. Some research has estimated that MSM dating app users are more than twice as likely as the general population to experience IBSA (Waldman, 2019), though other research suggests MSM may suffer IBSA at a rate five to six times higher than heterosexual people (Lenhart, Ybarra, & Price-Feeney, 2016). In a recent study, Powell et al. (2020) found that over half of MSM have experienced IBSA.

It should be noted that men are more likely than women to be perpetrators of IBSA (Powell et al., 2020). This finding holds true for MSM. Henry et al. (2017) found that 80% of MSM who had experienced IBSA reported that the abuse was perpetrated by another man. Similarly, in a study by Garcia, Gesselman, and Siliman (2016), MSM were more than twice as likely to distribute another person's sexual image without their consent. These findings suggest that MSM occupy a unique position relative to IBSA: although they experience high rates of victimization, they are also frequently perpetrators.

In addition to online sexual harassment, IBSA, online threats, and other sexually aggressive behaviors online, another manifestation of TFSV is the use of dating apps to perpetrate a sexual assault in person (Fairbairn, 2015; Powell & Henry, 2017). In their investigation of sexual assaults related to dating app use, Rowse, Bolt, and Gaya (2020) found that 14% of alleged sexual assaults happened after meeting someone from a dating app; over 50% occurred at the perpetrator's private residence; and, in over 80% of cases, the assault was committed the first time the dating app users met in person. Although Rowse et al.'s (2020) study did not include statistics on MSM, there are reports of men experiencing sexual assault from someone they met through online dating (see National Crime Agency, 2016).

TFSV is a concern for MSM dating app users. In a study on perceived risks related to dating app use, Albury and Byron (2016) noted that same sex attracted individuals were more worried about sexual predators and non-consensual sexual relations than sexual health. Bauermeister, Giguere, Carballo-Dieguez, Ventuneac, and Eisenberg (2010) found that about half of MSM worry about their physical safety when meeting someone online, and more than one in 10 are specifically concerned about forced sex and rape. Similarly, Corriero and Tong (2016) reported that fears of sexual violence – such as harassment, physical harm, and rape – are common among MSM dating app users. These concerns are not unfounded. Waldman's (2019) study found that MSM have experienced harassment, catfishing, sextortion, and IBSA through their use of dating apps.

Method

The data presented in this chapter comes from a qualitative research project examining the experiences of MSM dating app users. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 MSM dating app users in Autumn 2017 in Montreal, Canada. Participants were required to identify as an MSM dating app user and be at least 18 years old. Participants were recruited for three months using snowball sampling and flyers posted at a large Canadian university and in Montreal's gay neighborhood.

Following Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbott's (2015) approach for collecting data, participants were offered three interview options – in person, by telephone, or via an online chat – and were encouraged to choose the option best suited to their desired level of comfort, accessibility, and anonymity. The majority of participants chose to interview in person ($n = 19$), although a few interviewed by telephone ($n = 3$) and online chat ($n = 3$). Each interview lasted about one hour and was conducted in either English or French (with French interview data later translated into English).

All participants self-identified as MSM dating app users, with 24 identifying their gender as male and one identifying as gender-fluid. Most participants identified as gay, though two identified as queer and one identified as bisexual. No participants identified as transgender. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 62 years. While the majority of participants identified as White ($n = 14$), participants also identified as Middle Eastern ($n = 3$), Hispanic ($n = 3$), Multiracial ($n = 3$), Asian ($n = 1$), and Black ($n = 1$). Pseudonyms are used throughout the chapter in order to protect participants' identities. The most used MSM dating app among participants was Grindr ($n = 23$), though many participants also used other apps and websites, including Tinder, Scruff, Hornet, and OkCupid. Participants reported that they mainly used the apps to seek sex, meet people, and find dates or relationships.

In the interviews, I asked participants about their experiences with dating apps, including any unwanted sexual interactions they may have had while interacting with other MSM online or in person. I also asked participants if, and how, rape culture manifests on Grindr. Participants were not provided with a definition of rape culture, nor were they corrected if their definition did not align with the definition I adopted for this research. I thematically analyzed the data following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. Thematic analysis "is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" such that "it minimally organizes and describes [a] data set in (rich) detail" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

Findings

Participants said that MSM dating app users regularly imposed their sexual desires on other users and presumed another user's consent without asking. According to Michael (18, gay, male, White), "they don't know or care if the other person is attracted to them... if the other person is even looking for a sexual relationship." Ang (36, gay, male, Asian) similarly felt that users "assume that they have the right to do everything that they want." Robert (23, gay, male,

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White) figured this was because app users share common sexual identities: "gay guys are, you know, everybody thinks that we always want sex."

Participants talked about how MSM presume what another dating app user wants because of the information available on their profile. Robert (23, gay, male, White) explained that "if your profile says, 'looking for hookup' of course you're going to think, 'Oh, he wants naked pictures.'" Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black) gave another example: "someone may put on their profile that they're 100% a power bottom and someone just automatically messages them and is like, 'Oh yeah, you like to take it up on the ass or get gang banged.'"

Some participants discussed race and ethnicity in relation to rape culture. Charlie (24, gay, male, White) identified the fetishization of racialized MSM dating app users as one of its manifestations. Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black) talked about a user profiling him because he is Black: "he hits me up, and we start talking a little bit, and he went on to say, 'You look like you'd be a great rapist.'"

A few participants talked about situations in which MSM dating app users had pressured them or tried to persuade them into engaging in a sexual activity, even if they said they were not interested. As Nicolas (62, gay, male, Multiracial) explained, "they think that they'll be able to convince you, that you're almost playing hard to get, as if it's a game." Alexandre (25, gay, male, White) found that "some people can't understand that you're not interested in them and keep insisting." Similarly, Mason (26, bisexual, male, Multiracial) said some users do not take "no" for an answer: "if they're insisting and you made it very clear that you're not interested, that could probably be one way that rape culture could manifest itself on Grindr."

Participants were not always on the receiving end of this behavior. Some participants admitted that they may have interacted with other users in problematic ways. Gabriel (21, gay, male, White), for example, reflected on why other users had blocked him on the apps: "I imagine

that I might have been insistent." Similarly, Robert (23, gay, male, White) said, "I may have been pushy one or two times with someone." Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black) also recognized that his behavior could have been an issue sometimes: "maybe I was the one who was being persistent or maybe I said something that was not savory or classy or... I mean, we're not perfect, right?"

The two most commonly mentioned experiences of rape culture on MSM dating apps include unwanted sexual messages and unwanted sexual images. As Oscar (22, gay, male, White) explained: "that's its manifestation on Grindr, when there's been no consent or there's been no context to go further sexually by text or images." Below I discuss participants' experiences with messages and images and also explore how rape culture extends from apps to in-person encounters. This section closes with reflections on the ways in which apps facilitate rape culture.

Messages

Participants talked about MSM dating app users who impose themselves on unwilling, uninterested recipients by sending "aggressive" and "invasive" messages. Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black) gave the following example: "the first message, you open up to a guy who is like, 'I want to take you, grab you by the hair, and fuck you hard in the ass.'" Charlie (24, gay, male, White) said these messages "might make you feel threatened for your physical safety or for your own per- sonal integrity," while Noah (28, gay, male, White) described them as "degrading" but "normalized in the gay male world."

Skyler (28, queer, male, White), who had experienced this "super pushy" and "violent" behavior from users despite not giving any indication he was interested in them, explained that these messages imply "someone is purely meant for someone else's sexual gratification." Elijah (18, gay, male, White) said these messages reduce people to sexual objects: "you're not necessarily treating them like a person, you're just treating them as someone to have sex with."

Talking about how he felt when he received such messages, Nicolas (62, gay, male, Multiracial) said, "it's almost like being violated right off the bat."

Images

Participants said it was common for MSM dating app users to save and share other users' sexual images without their consent. Oscar (22, gay, male, White) had exchanged photos with a casual sex partner and found his photos shared on Facebook. Noah (28, gay, male, White) had a sexual partner from years ago who saved and shared his photos and only became aware of it when a friend approached him at the gym and informed him that the person was distributing photos of his penis online. Both Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black) and Charlie (24, gay, male, White) reported that in the weeks prior to their interviews, numerous local MSM dating app users had their photos posted on an anonymous Tumblr account. Said Charlie (24, gay, male, White): "someone made a Montreal Tumblr blog where they were messaging all these people and getting their pictures and their dick pics, and they posted them all on this Tumblr."

Charlie (24, gay, male, White) and Theo (20, gay, gender-fluid, Multiracial) referred to the non-consensual dissemination of sexual photos as "revenge porn." Charlie (24, gay, male, White) explained that revenge porn is "a form of sexual assault" and "a huge part of rape culture." Theo (20, gay, gender-fluid, Multi- racial) agreed that this was a clear example of rape culture from MSM dating apps: "the sharing of pictures without someone's consent – that's straight-up rape culture."

Participants were concerned about the consequences that dissemination could have on their lives and careers. Ravi (28, gay, male, Middle Eastern) stated he and his friends do not trust anyone on Grindr out of concerns for their sexual photos being leaked. Ang (36, gay, male, Asian) agreed: "Given the fact that I am in the profession I am, I'm really reluctant to take such pictures. Anything that can get out could have devastating consequences." Mason (26, bisexual,

male, Multiracial) and William (25, gay, male, White) also discussed the ease at which sexual photos can become public and explained that an MSM dating app user could extort another person by using their photos as blackmail.

Participants identified unwanted sexual photos, such as unsolicited "dick pics," as a manifestation of rape culture on MSM dating apps. Oscar (22, gay, male, White) and William (25, gay, male, White) explained it was common for people to assume that other users want to receive these photos, even without "any indication of wanting them." Toby (20, gay, male, White) found "an unsolicited nude" problematic because "I can see that causing harm to someone who doesn't want to see it." Some participants admitted that they had sent unsolicited dick pics to other MSM dating app users: "If I'm really horny," said Elijah (18, gay, male, White), "sometimes I'll send one of those."

Robert (23, gay, male, White) described rape culture on MSM dating apps in terms of feeling coerced or pressured to reciprocate in sharing sexual photos, whether or not he had wanted to receive them from someone else. He explained, "you feel like you have to send a picture just because you received one. So that's part of the definition, I think, that applies to Grindr."

From Apps to In-Person Encounters

Participants emphasized that rape culture extended beyond their interactions on MSM dating apps to interactions they had in person. For example, participants talked about users who did not respect personal boundaries. Michael (18, gay, male, White) said there was a user who had stalked him online and used the social media accounts connected to his dating app profile to find and contact his friends. Nicolas (62, gay, male, Multiracial) expressed concern about users taking advantage of the geo-locating function of dating apps to pinpoint where he lived. Skyler (28, queer, male, White) said he felt uncomfortable when people found him in real life and gave

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the example of receiving a message from someone who said they had seen him on the street: "I think they're trying to be flirty, but it's a little bit creepy."

Participants talked about feeling pressured to follow through on a proposed sexual activity when they met an MSM dating app user in person. For example, Toby (20, gay, male, White) explained that users might feel obligated to have sex because of the amount of time they spent arranging and preparing for a sexual encounter. Toby (20, gay, male, White) commented that, "there's such an expectation, like if you traveled to get here, if you douched as a bottom, if you shaved or whatever, it's [sex] very much expected." Karam (46, gay, male, Middle Eastern) similarly spoke about feeling compelled to have sex, even if he was no longer interested in the user: "I wouldn't call that rape, but I would definitely start lumping it in." Jadyn (32, gay, male, Black) described the situation as such:

> It's this weird fucked-up dynamic of when you are going through with something when you don't really want to and you're like, "I need to get this over with." In a sense, you are consenting, because you're like, "I am going forward. No one is holding a gun to my head or whatever." But it's a sort of social obligation gun-being-held-to-my-head and I feel like I'm doing something that I don't actually want to do.

Participants also discussed feeling passive and complaisant, and experiencing situations where they agreed to engage in an unwanted sexual activity. Robert (23, gay, male, White) recounted a time when he conceded to having sex because of how badly the other person wanted it. Pierre (25, gay, male, White) said there were a few times when an MSM dating app user he was giving oral sex expected him to deep throat even though "the consent wasn't there." Elijah (18, gay, male, White) said he had been "taken advantage of" when he was younger because he would "just roll with things" and give "a hesitant 'yes' not a solid 'yes.'" Logan (18, gay, male, White) admitted that there were times he "regretted having sex with someone" even though the

sexual interaction was "not bad enough for me to stop." Joe (31, gay, male, White) had this experience:

> There was one man who came – and I like soft sensual sex and he liked really rough sex – and he just jammed it in there. And I thought, "I do not like that." But instead of extricating myself from the situation, I just sat and finished and let him be on his way. And that made me uncomfortable because there was a point in the situation when I was no longer consenting, but it was still happening. And I didn't feel comfortable enough to stop it from happening.

A few participants gave examples of sexual violence they had experienced from MSM dating app users. Hugo (23, queer, male, Hispanic) recounted a time when he was forced to give a blow job. Charlie (24, gay, male, White) talked about a user he had invited to his house to have sex with but was too aggressive and would not take "no" for an answer: "It actually ended with me almost calling the cops." Ravi (28, gay, male, Middle Eastern) gave the example of a user who seemed fine online but when they met in person, turned out to be a "wild sex animal" who tried to bite him and force him into having sex. Luis (43, gay, male, Hispanic) discussed two situations in which casual sex partners prioritized their sexual interests over his comfort, safety, and wellbeing: "I have been raped twice as a result of the recklessness of people and the dismissiveness, the lack of respect for an already agreed-upon conversation." In one instance, Luis (43, gay, male, Hispanic) and an MSM dating app user had messaged and agreed about what they would and would not do during sex. When they met in person, however, the user disregarded their agreement and penetrated Luis without his consent.

As explained above, some MSM dating app users make assumptions about other users based on their profiles, which can lead to sexually violent behavior. Noah (28, gay, male, White), for example, had a casual sex partner who he thought liked rough sex, so he choked him. After

they hooked up, Noah (28, gay, male, White) discovered that this partner did not like being choked and immediately apologized, but said that experience "kind of traumatized" him.

Reflections on the Ways in Which Apps Facilitate Rape Culture

Participants felt that rape culture manifests more on some MSM dating apps than others. William (25, gay, male, White) explained that because any user can contact any other user on Grindr, it is "more likely" to experience an unwanted interaction on Grindr than on Tinder. Elijah (18, gay, male, White) similarly asserted that it is "easier" for rape culture to manifest on Grindr than Tinder because "on Tinder you have to give them the opportunity first – you both have to swipe right."

However, there was a lack of consensus among participants regarding the extent to which MSM dating apps facilitate rape culture. Some participants felt that the apps were responsible. Diego (35, gay, male, Hispanic) said the design of MSM dating apps and the affordances of the internet, such as the ability to operate anonymously online, provide a "shield" for users to act however they want without any consequences. Ang (36, gay, male, Asian) asserted that the culture of the apps encouraged sexual violence: "For such applications, the base goal is fast encounters. So, when you go for fast encounters, you're not necessarily going to have the time to cover all the angles of what you consent to and what you don't."

Other participants felt that rape culture on MSM dating apps was a reflection of societal norms. Toby (20, gay, male, White) said, "I wouldn't vilify Grindr. I think it's just the platform that we see rape culture occurring because of the society and the norms that we live in." Similarly, Luis (43, gay, male, Hispanic) explained that even though apps may be the venue through which rape culture occurs, sexual violence is not the fault of apps, but is caused by "utmost selfishness of a human being."

One participant held both perspectives. Although Dion (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern) felt that rape culture was made "easier" by MSM dating apps, he did not blame them for the sexual violence MSM may experience:

> Grindr would be the facilitator, but not really the culprit.... As a hook-up app, you might go and meet a stranger in a sexual setting and this person might do things to you, or you do things to them, that is not consensual and it's just part of rape culture.

Discussion

When considering how rape culture manifests on MSM dating apps, participants said rape culture appeared through the messages and images they received from other users. They spoke about being sent violent comments and unsolicited nude photos. These examples are not surprising because, by the very nature of being online, people's behavior is limited to specific virtual actions and interactions. Messages and images are the main ways that individuals communicate and connect with one another online. The aggressive, dominating, presumptive, and unwanted behavior that comes about through users' messages and images indicates the presence of rape culture on MSM dating apps.

Participants discussed situations where rape culture extended beyond their online interactions with MSM dating app users. They gave numerous examples of technology-based sexual violence, including image-based sexual abuse, harassment, stalking, coercion, threats, and sexual assault. These results align with previous research, which has similarly found that TFSV spans across people's online and offline interactions (Henry & Powell, 2014; Powell & Henry, 2017).

Participants also explained that incidents of TFSV were emotionally traumatizing, physically violent, and could negatively impact their lives and careers. Again, these results support previous research that has documented the detrimental effects of TFSV on people's

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safety, health, and wellbeing (Scarduzio, Sheff, & Smith, 2018), including emotional and physical harm (Fairbairn, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2016), as well as consequences on their jobs and relationships (Citron & Franks, 2014).

The online and in-person manifestations of rape culture participants described relative to their use of MSM dating apps demonstrate that rape culture is not limited to a space or context; rape culture is present throughout society. This was further evident as participants considered the extent to which apps facilitate rape culture. The socio-cultural societal norms that people embody, practice, and perpetuate mean that rape culture can manifest wherever people are: online, in person, and across these spaces. Technology does not create a separate world in which rape culture can manifest; rather, it extends and expands upon the experiences people have in physical space (boyd, 2010; Mowlabocus, 2010).

This notion was reflected in participants' comments about the extent to which MSM dating apps facilitate rape culture. As Toby (20, gay, male, White) explained, dating apps are "the platform[s] that we see rape culture occurring because of the society and the norms that we live in." Even though participants disagreed about whether the affordances of MSM dating apps made it was easier for rape culture to manifest, participants recognized that MSM dating app users' behaviors were indicative of larger socio-cultural issues present in society.

MSM dating apps occupy a unique position in the lives of MSM because they can help address everyday manifestations of rape culture. For example, MSM dating apps offer users the ability to block and report users who engage in "bad behavior" (Grindr, 2020a). In Summer 2019, Grindr added options for users to indicate on their profile if, or to what extent, they are open to receiving "NSFW [Not Safe For Work] Pics" from other users and where they prefer to meet another app user, such as "My Place," "Your Place," "Bar," "Coffee Shop," or "Restaurant" (Grindr, 2020b). While there is a need for researchers to investigate the effectiveness of these in-

app features, their presence suggests that MSM dating app companies are cognizant of the sexual violence that can happen through their platforms and feel at least some sense of responsibility to help their users tackle such problems.

One challenge in addressing rape culture against MSM is understanding that MSM can be both victims and perpetrators of sexual violence. This finding was reflected in the experiences of participants who described, in their interactions online and in person, situations where they had been both victims and perpetrators of sexual violence. MSM occupy a unique position in society as they possess both majority and minority identities. As men, MSM are endowed with power and privilege, but as queer people with non-normative sexual and gender identities, MSM may also be marginalized: "This person might do things to you, or you might to things to them, that is not consensual and it's just part of rape culture," explained Dion (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern).

Participants spoke to this duality as they discussed the sexual norms of MSM communities, specifically as they asserted that gay men "always want sex" and that unwanted sexual advances are "normalized in the gay male world." These comments reflect Hollway's (1998, p. 63) male sexual drive discourse, which "sees men as sexually insatiable and male sexuality as naturally an uncontrollable drive." When applied to the context of MSM dating apps, this means MSM dating app users may feel pressured to consent or follow through with a sexual activity, even when they are uninterested. It also suggests that MSM may assume other dating app users are always open to sexual advances, that other users always want to engage in sexual activity, and subsequently, that other users always consent.

However, as evident in the data, MSM can also be targets of sexual violence. Participants spoke of societal assumptions about them, such as always wanting sex, and about the pressure to engage in a sexual activity, in both their online and offline interactions with other MSM. On apps, participants asserted that users "assume they have the right to do whatever they want," such

as send sexual messages and photos to a recipient without "any indication of wanting them."

Participants discussed feeling pressured to engage in sexual acts with MSM on dating apps, such

as feeling obliged "to send a picture just because you received one." When interacting with MSM

dating app users in person, participants similarly explained that sexual activity was "expected,"

and described it as "a sort of social obligation" that they "didn't feel comfortable enough to stop

it from happening," even when it was "not a solid 'yes'" (Cama, 2021). Whether on apps or in

person, MSM dating app users may presume the consent of other users and may expect

themselves, and others, to engage in a sexual act, even when feeling coerced or disinterested

(Gavey et al., 2009; Klesse, 2016).

Sexual violence comes in many forms (Kelly, 1988) yet men, and MSM in particular, do

not always identify themselves as victims or survivors of sexual violence (Braun et al., 2009;

Davies, 2002). Further, rape myths perpetuate stereotypes and assumptions about sexual violence

against people of diverse gender and sexual identities in ways that further obfuscate MSM

experiences with rape culture (Mortimer et al., 2019). Whether intentionally or unintentionally,

MSM dating app users may also contribute to the trivialization and denial of rape culture against

MSM and queer people.

Dion's (37, gay, male, Middle Eastern) comment that "this person might do things to you,

or you might to things to them, that is not consensual and it's just part of rape culture" not only

highlights the unique positionality of MSM but also dismisses the sexual aggression, harm, and

violence MSM dating app users commit against one another. Similarly, other participants seemed

to accept sexual violence as banal and unavoidable, including Noah (28, gay, male, White) who

said this behavior was "normalized in the gay male world." Comments such as these minimize

and invisibilize sexual violence against MSM and also frame rape culture against MSM as

"inevitable" (Keller et al., 2018; Smith, 2004).

In a rape culture, a person's body exists only as a source of sexual pleasure for another person, such that the body is objectified and, in the cases of racialized people, fetishized (Smith, 2004). These ideologies were also reflected in participants' experiences, including for Skyler (28, queer, male, White) who explained that receiving messages made him feel like a sexual object, "purely meant for someone else's sexual gratification." However, it is important to note that rape culture does not affect everyone similarly. Racialized people face higher rates of sexual violence than white people (Black et al., 2011), and racialized MSM experience additional oppression and victimization that white MSM do not (Meyer, 2012). My findings similarly suggest that racialized MSM dating app users are uniquely targeted in rape culture. It would be valuable for future research to investigate issues of sexual consent and sexual violence specific to racialized MSM dating app users.

There are other limitations in this study that future research could address. Since this chapter focused on manifestations of rape culture against MSM, future studies could explore and develop a conceptualization of rape culture sensitive to people of diverse genders and sexualities. Similarly, a future study could examine how factors like culture, country of origin, and language affect MSM perceptions of, and experiences with, rape culture online and in person. Because participants were not given an "official" definition of rape culture, they may have held different or conflicting understandings. Furthermore, since men may not perceive of themselves as victims or survivors of sexual violence (Braun et al., 2009; Davies, 2002), some participants may have experienced sexual violence but did not identify it as such, or did not consider it as a manifestation of rape culture. Future research could present MSM with a definition of rape culture and a variety of scenarios to examine if, and how, they connect sexual violence with rape culture. Lastly, it would be beneficial for future research to take a quantitative or mixed methods research approach to explore potential connections between rape culture and different variables,

such as MSM identities (e.g., age, sexual position, relationship status), sexual practices (e.g., condom use, drug and alcohol consumption), and app-related behaviors (e.g., profile image, profile content, years of usage, frequency of use).

Conclusion

Rape culture, described as when "violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent" (Buchwald et al., 1993, p. vii), manifests for MSM in a variety of ways on dating apps and in person. This chapter has documented rape culture related to the use of MSM dating apps and highlighted the range of sexually violent behaviors present in online and offline spaces and across those spaces. While this research is helpful as scholars increasingly explore rape culture against people of diverse genders and sexualities, these findings largely support current understandings of rape culture: sexual violence is tolerated and normalized in society (Henry & Powell, 2014); male sexual aggression is expected and condoned (Keller et al., 2018; Smith, 2004); perpetrators of sexual violence are excused (Phipps et al., 2018; Sills et al., 2016); men's consent is presumed (Hollway, 1998); bodies are objectified and fetishized (Smith, 2004); and racialized people experience additional victimization (Meyer, 2012).

If we continue to focus on heterosexual people's experiences with rape culture, the experiences of people outside of those identities risk being minimized, silenced, and rendered invisible. This can result in people who have suffered sexual violence failing to identify their own experiences as such because of a lack of awareness, representation, and understanding. Particularly in relation to connections facilitated by technology, there is an urgent need to understand how sexual violence manifests in and across online spaces and in-person spaces. It is crucial for research to continue to explore rape culture, sexual violence, and the lived experiences of sexually diverse and gender diverse people so we, as a society, can develop better theoretical

and empirical understandings of these problems and work toward safe, healthy, and consensual

sexual relationships for everyone in practice.

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CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

This dissertation highlights and addresses the nature and extent to which sexual violence is facilitated through MSM's use of dating apps. In this chapter, I discuss key findings from the three individual studies presented in Chapters 4–6 and explore their implications.

I begin this chapter by providing supplementary information about the methods I used in the three studies. Next, I present findings from each study and connect my findings to literature in the field. I then discuss the implications of my research, detailing how I have applied my findings through educational interventions, community work, and collaborations with technology companies. The chapter closes with a summary of the key points.

Analysis

In this section, I analyze key findings from Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3, and I connect them to literature in the field. I call specific attention to findings that address the overarching goal of my dissertation: to highlight and address the nature and extent of sexual violence against MSM that is facilitated through dating apps. I begin with findings from Study 1 on sexual consent from Chapter 4. Next, I discuss findings from Study 2 on unsolicited dick pics from Chapter 5. This section closes with findings from Study 3 on manifestations of rape culture from Chapter 6.

Study 1: Sexual Consent

MSM dating app users in Study 1 recognized that consent is an agreement (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016; Beres, 2007) and that consent includes both internal feelings of desire and external expressions of that desire (Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Gruber, 2016). Some participants described consent as an ongoing, continuous process (Humphreys, 2004; Beres, 2014) and explained that consent should be informed, enthusiastic, and freely given (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Other participants emphasized that consent entails care and respect

for another person (Bauer, 2014; Barker, 2013). Participants' descriptions of consent generally reflected the affirmative consent model (Gruber, 2016), with some even referencing it by name.

However, findings revealed a tension between participants' conceptualizations of consent and their consent practices. Participants understood consent discourses but did not always apply them to their sexual interactions with other MSM dating app users. Some participants acknowledged this tension directly, admitting that their actions did not reflect their knowledge of consent. Although MSM dating app users may understand consent frameworks, they may intentionally dismiss them in pursuit of a sexual activity.

Sexual Consent Does Not Apply to In-App or In-Person Sexual Activity

MSM may not structure their online interactions with other MSM around sexual consent. There are a few reasons for this. First, not all of MSM's online interactions are sexual, meaning that a sexual consent framework does not always apply. Second, MSM have different interpretations of what constitutes a sexual activity. MSM may differentiate between conversations that serve to inform (e.g., "exchanging pics") and interactions that are sexually-arousing (i.e., sexting) (Albury & Byron, 2016; Albury & Crawford, 2012). Moreover, some MSM may equate "sex" with sexual intercourse (Graham, 2017), thereby dismissing the need to apply consent to their online sexual interactions. Lastly, some participants explained that consent was more important in person because of the potential for physical violence. Thus, the affordances of online spaces (Suler, 2004) and the in-app safety mechanisms (e.g., blocking, reporting) may contribute to an assumption that online consent is less important or irrelevant to in-app sexual interactions.

There was one participant who asserted that MSM do not structure their relationships around consent. He did not offer an explanation as to why, though the finding I presented above suggests one possible reason for this: MSM recognize consent practices but choose not to enact

them. Another reason may be because men's consents is always assumed (Hollway, 1998), though it may also reflect the stereotype that gay men always want sex (Klesse, 2016). MSM might not structure their relationships around consent because of their adherence to sexual scripts, masculine ideals, and gender roles (McKie, 2015). Overall, findings from my study and other studies suggest that a combination of social norms and expectations contribute to issues of consent among MSM. More research is needed to explore the reasons why and extent to which MSM do not structure their sexual interactions around consent.

Sexual Consent as Connecting to a Dating App

Some participants conceptualized consent online as a discrete event (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). For them, connecting to a dating app equated to consent. This notion may reflect MSM dating app users' relationships with apps. When MSM consent to using the app, they remain present and engaged in that space, such that their consent is ongoing. When they no longer consent to using the app, they leave the app. MSM dating app users with this conceptualization of consent may apply the same logic to their interactions with other MSM. When they consent to having sexual interactions with other MSM, they log into the app and remain in the app. When they no longer consent to having sexual interactions with other MSM, they disconnect.

MSM have a history of equating consent to presence in a space. Grov, Breslow, Newcomb, Rosenberger, and Bauermeister (2014) explained that MSM who went to public sex environment, such as bathhouses, assumed the consent of other MSM in that space. They also explained that, in those spaces, MSM often dealt with the possibility of experiencing physical harm, assault, and rape (Grov et al, 2014).

The fact that MSM conceptualize consent as connecting to a dating app means that they may dismiss their responsibility to respect the boundaries of people within that space. It also

means that MSM dating app users may not regard their own actions as sexually violent, even though other users may experience their sexual advances and behaviors as such.

Sexual Consent Practices on Dating Apps

Participants explained that they negotiated consent online through explicit and non-explicit communication. MSM dating app users explicitly communicate and negotiate consent by sending messages and asking questions. MSM dating app users also use non-explicit means to signal and interpret consent. Participants described consent cues in the forms of the tone of a message, the length of a message, and another user's response time. Additionally, participants talked about interpreting cues from another user's profile as they assessed the sexual interests of that user. These cues include the type of image displayed on a user's profile and the information given on their profile. Since MSM dating app users employ a variety of techniques to infer other users' consent and imply their own (Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Block, 2004), these findings emphasize that, more than communication, mutual understanding is key to negotiating and enacting consent on dating apps.

It is also important to note that there are limitations to communicating consent online. MSM use dating apps for a variety of reasons (Albury et al., 2019), which means that MSM may be online looking for sexual and/or non-sexual interactions. As such, MSM dating app users may feel conflicted about engaging in a sexual activity (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2005). They may continue with an online sexual interaction, even when they feel indifferent or uninterested (Sweeney, 2014; Beres, Senn, & McCaw, 2014). This challenges the assumption that online communications of consent accurately portray an MSM dating app user's internal desires. It also means that MSM dating app users may imply consent (Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Block, 2004) or perform consent (Muehlenhard et al., 2016) in situations where they are ambivalent about or disinterested in an online sexual interaction.

Another limitation to communicating consent online relates to the consumption of drugs and alcohol. Online communications complicate the possibility of determining whether an MSM dating app user is intoxicated or under the influence of illicit substances. When interacting in person, there are often visible signs demonstrating that a person is incapacitated. Online, such signs of intoxication are removed. Granted, there are cues which could signal potential intoxication, such as grammatical and spelling mistakes. However, in the context of online messaging, people often use shorthand or slang to communicate a message in as few words or characters as possible. People also pay less attention to grammar and spelling online and, in some cases, improper grammar and spelling is intentional. And these are only a few of the numerous reasons why MSM may not utilize proper grammar or spelling in their online communications with other dating app users. Unless an MSM dating app user directly asks another user if they are intoxicated – which even then, the responding user could lie or employ performative consent (Muehlenhard et al., 2016) – it may be difficult to discern if another dating app user is too intoxicated to consent to a sexual interaction online.

In the United States and Canada, a person who is incapacitated by drugs and/or alcohol is legally unable to consent to a sexual activity (Eileraas, 2011). It is not clear to me if, or how, this applies to online sexual interactions. I am not a legal scholar, nor is it within the scope of this dissertation to consider this question. However, it is important to note as there may be legal concerns and legal implications related to giving consent for an online sexual interaction.

Sexual Consent across In-App and In-Person Interactions

Participants explained that they discussed and negotiated their interests before meeting in person. Some of these negotiations may be sexual, while other negotiations are non-sexual. The purpose of negotiating is to set the parameters of their (potential) meeting, including sexual parameters and non-sexual parameters. Sexual parameters may be framed around specific sexual

activities, PrEP, condom use, substance use, and/or sexual kinks. Examples of non-sexual parameters include where the MSM want to meet, when, and for how long. Through negotiation, MSM dating app users explain their interests and desires along with their boundaries and limits. As such, the parameters MSM negotiate and set online touch on a variety of factors – sexual and non-sexual – that are related to safety, health, and comfort. This finding is consistent with and expands upon previous research (McKie, 2015; Albury et al., 2019), which similarly found that MSM negotiate a variety of sexual and non-sexual parameters before meeting in person.

Several participants noted that online negotiations do not guarantee follow through. MSM are not obliged to carry out all, or any, of the activities the discussed online. Meeting in person is one step in the ongoing process of negotiating consent. Negotiations of consent are continuous, and people can stop consenting at any point (Humphreys, 2004; Beres, 2014). Despite this, findings revealed that there are MSM dating app users who do not conceptualize or practice consent as an ongoing negotiation spanning across their online and in-person interactions.

My analysis revealed that there are MSM who rigidly structure their in-person sexual encounter around the parameters discussed online. These MSM conceptualize consent as a contract. My analysis also revealed that some MSM rely on the parameters discussed online and make little or no effort to talk about consent when they meet for an in-person encounter. These MSM conceptualize consent as an assumption.

MSM who conceptualize and practice consent as a contract may expect their partners to follow through on everything discussed online. Problems could arise if those expectations are not met. Do these MSM coerce their partners into continuing? Do they threat violence? Do they force their partner to engage in the expected sexual activity, thereby perpetrating sexual assault? Many questions arise about the in-person consequences related to consent as a contract, though it is not within the scope of this dissertation to investigate those potential issues. Future research should

explore this idea of consent as a contract and focus on the ways in which this conceptualization of consent may facilitate sexual violence.

Participants who discussed consent as an assumption explained that they had given their consent to anything vaguely mentioned in their online conversation. As such, MSM who conceptualize consent as an assumption may use their online interactions and the parameters discussed online to guide their in-person sexual encounter. These MSM may signal consent through cues (Beres, Herold, & Maitland, 2004), by engaging in a sexual activity (Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014), or by not doing or saying anything to stop the advances of their partner (Beres et al., 2014). My findings also revealed that some MSM consider their online discussions to be an expression of partial consent, that they confirm by meeting in person. Previous research, which found that MSM interpret online discussions of sexual interests as consent for in-person sexual activities (McKie, 2015; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999), supports this finding.

Consent as an assumption also raises concerns about the possibility of sexual violence occurring in person. MSM may feel pressured to continue with a sexual activity (Pascoe, 2005; Sweeney, 2014; Wiederman, 2005) because of expectations discussed online. Additionally, if something goes awry during the in-person sexual encounter, MSM may not interpret their actions as perpetuating sexual violence and/or may not recognize that they experienced sexual violence. Unfortunately, MSM have a history of minimizing their experiences of sexual violence as MSM do not always identify themselves as victims or survivors of sexual violence (Braun, Schmidt, Gavey, & Fenaughty, 2009; Davies, 2002). This means that, so long as their experience reflects what they discussed online, MSM who practice consent as an assumption may not view their actions or the actions of their partner as sexual violence. MSM may also employ a "willed ambiguity" (Namaste et al., 2020) to minimize or dismiss incidents of sexual violence, either in their experience or the experience of their partner.

One explanation for why MSM practice consent as a contract or as an assumption may be because they feel more comfortable and confident having discussions about consent online than in person. Previous research supports this assertion. Online interactions give MSM more confidence and liberty to discuss topics more openly because of their ability to be anonymous and control the situation (Suler, 2004) and be direct and shameless about what they are interested in sexually (Race, 2015). MSM may also feel more comfortable knowing that they can use in-app mechanisms if something goes wrong (Duguay, Burgess, & Light, 2017).

In fact, participants spoke to this last point. They explained that in-app mechanisms – especially blocking and reporting – made it easier to say "no" to MSM online, or to take action when they feel unsafe. Of course, these and other affordances are not available in person. It may be scary or difficult for MSM to vocalize concerns, interrupt unwanted or unsafe behavior, or try to leave a sexually violent situation when they are interacting with someone in person. It may be even more difficult for MSM with intersectional identities to take action because of fears of additional harassment and identity-based violence.

There are other explanations for why MSM dating app users practice consent as a contract and consent as an assumption. First, MSM may be concerned that explicit conversations about consent will hinder spontaneity or ruin the mood (Humphreys, 2007). As such, MSM may prefer to negotiate consent online. Second, since dating apps facilitate and encourage quick sexual encounters (Licoppe, Rivière, & Morel, 2015), MSM may prioritize their sexual interests over the safety, comfort, and consent of their partner. It is likely that sexual scripts and cultural norms are also factors (McKie, 2015). Lastly, MSM may not feel the need to (re)negotiate consent when meeting in person since men's consent is always assumed (Hollway, 1998) and gay men are expected to consent to any sexual activity (Klesse, 2016).

Overall, my findings on sexual consent practices among MSM interacting online and in person suggest that there are many potential issues related to sexual violence that could arise through their use of dating apps. In the following section, I present findings from the Chapter 5 study and focus on a specific act of online sexual violence: the unsolicited dick pic (DP).

Study 2: Unsolicited Dick Pics

Findings from Study 2 showed that, similar to Marcotte and colleagues' (2020) findings, MSM dating app users have positive, neutral, and negative feelings about receiving unsolicited DPs. Some of my participants reported feeling "great" or "indifferent" when receiving unsolicited DPs, while others felt "uncomfortable" or "assaulted". The qualitative nature of my study allowed MSM to describe their experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs in their own terms and in ways that go beyond positive, neutral, and negative (Marcotte et al., 2020). The findings I present in this section provide more nuance to MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited DPs.

Some participants described receiving unsolicited DPs relative to consent, including one who emphasized that unsolicited DPs were non-consensual "by definition". Participants also used words like "unwanted", "harassment", and "assault" to report their experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. Words such as these have also been used to describe unwanted sexual advances, online sexual harassment, and image-based sexual abuse (Henry & Powell, 2018), which are three types of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Henry & Powell, 2018). Thus, by matching participant's descriptions to previous research, unsolicited DPs constitute a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

In their book, titled *Sexual Violence in a Digital Age*, Powell and Henry (2017) noted that unsolicited DPs are a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence. Specifically, Powell and

Henry (2017) categorized unsolicited DPs under image-based sexual harassment, which was categorized under online sexual harassment, which was categorized under technology-facilitated sexual violence (see Chapter 2). Thus, my findings and Powell and Henry's (2017) findings both show that unsolicited DPs are a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV).

A few participants said that MSM dating app users assumed their consent to receiving unsolicited DPs because they were logged into an MSM dating app. This finding relates back to a Study 1 finding, which showed that some MSM dating app users equate consent to connecting to a dating app. This finding also reaffirms that MSM dating app users assume other men's consent (Hollway, 1998; Klesse, 2016), including for the receipt of unsolicited DPs.

Unsolicited DPs are a common occurrence in contemporary online dating culture (Mandau, 2019; Waling & Pym, 2017), including among MSM (Paasonen, Light, & Jarrett, 2019; Marcotte et al., 2020). My findings support this assertion. Participants explained that they expected to receive unsolicited DPs from other MSM when using a dating app. In fact, many participants talked about unsolicited DPs as being "normalized" in their experiences and in the culture of MSM dating apps. This suggests that unsolicited DPs are a "social norm" (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977) of MSM dating app culture. MSM dating app users participate in and perpetuate social norms that condone and excuse the sending of unsolicited DPs. Thus, MSM are themselves sustaining and promoting a culture of sexual harassment against MSM dating app users. Applying the notion of "willed ambiguity" (Namaste et al., 2020), this finding also suggests that MSM who send unsolicited DPs and MSM who normalize unsolicited DPs are complicit in supporting systems and beliefs that perpetuate TFSV against MSM.

In their discussions around the normalization of unsolicited DPs, participants differentiated between how they felt receiving unsolicited DPs and how they thought other MSM felt. This is an important distinction because many participants minimized their experiences.

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They had the impression that MSM dating app users want to receive unsolicited DPs and/or that they were supposed to enjoy receiving them. This finding suggests that MSM may dismiss their own experiences of unsolicited DPs as sexual violence because of assumed expectations about what MSM should want or should enjoy. This is a troubling finding because, as explained above, MSM minimize incidents of sexual violence and fail to see themselves as victims of sexual violence (Braun et al., 2009; Davies, 2002). Regardless of other people's experiences, if an MSM dating app user feels that an unsolicited DP is received non-consensually and/or if they experience an unsolicited DP as an incident of sexual violence, that MSM dating app user should recognize and address their feelings.

Findings showed that not all MSM receive the same number of unsolicited DPs, nor at the same frequency. In fact, findings suggest that aspects of a person's identity, such as age and race, may factor into how frequently MSM receive unsolicited DPs and how many they receive. Han and Choi's (2018) hierarchy of gay male desire supports this assertion. The hierarchy of gay male desire posits that MSM with socially desirable identities – notably, white MSM – receive more attention and are perceived as more attractive than MSM who are racialized (Han & Choi, 2018). As such, the quantity and frequency of unsolicited DPs received may correlate to where in the hierarchy of desirability an MSM's identity falls. Stated differently, MSM with desirable identities may receive more unsolicited DPs and/or may receive unsolicited DPs more often than MSM with less desirable identities. To my knowledge, there are no studies that have explored correlations between MSM's identities and MSM's experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. Despite this, there are numerous studies showing that racialized MSM are perceived as less desirable than white MSM and that racialized MSM's experiences may be inferior to those of white MSM (e.g., Han, 2007, 2008; Raj, 2011; Callander, Newman, & Holt, 2015; Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2012, 2016; Riggs, 2013; Robinson, 2015; Conner, 2018).

The qualitative nature of my study and the limited number of participants does not allow me to claim that the age or race of an MSM dating app user impacts the amount of unsolicited DPs an individual receives or the frequencies at which they receive unsolicited DPs. However, as Paasonen, Light, and Jarret (2019) also found, people's identities, perspectives, and backgrounds may factor into their experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited DPs. Although more research is needed to understand how MSM's identities factor into their experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs, my findings demonstrate the diversity of MSM's experiences and emphasize that there is more nuance to their experiences in ways that go beyond the categories of positive, negative, and neutral (Marcotte et al., 2020).

Three Dimensions of Unsolicited Dick Pics

My analysis uncovered three "dimensions" of unsolicited DPs. These dimensions capture the ways in which MSM describe their experience of receiving unsolicited DPs. These three dimensions also build on and align with previous research, which described unsolicited DPs in terms of desire, expectations, and harassment (Waling & Pym, 2017; Paasonen, Light, & Jarret, 2019; Mandau, 2019; Amundsen, 2020). The three dimensions I identified in my analysis are wanted/unwanted, typical/atypical, and consensual/non-consensual.

Findings revealed several factors that may affect MSM dating app users' experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. The seven factors I identified are: timing in a conversation, time of day, years of experience with MSM dating apps, mood (including level of sexual arousal), reason for using MSM dating apps, attractiveness of the person and/or the DP, and consumption of drugs and alcohol. Though I detailed these factors in Chapter 5, I want to highlight a few of them here. Below, I discuss timing in a conversation, experience with MSM dating apps, sexual arousal, and attractiveness to highlight how these four factors relate to sexual consent discourses and shed light on beliefs about sexual violence against MSM.

Timing in a Conversation. Participants explained that the timing of when an unsolicited DP was received made a difference. Specifically, they explained that when they received an unsolicited DP before engaging in a conversation with a user, the DP was less wanted and/or less consensual than when it was received after exchanging a few messages with that user. This finding aligns with sexual consent frameworks such that, in order to engage in a sexual activity, partners want to establish mutual understanding and trust (Bauer, 2014; Barker, 2013). Additionally, sexual relations are perceived as more consensual the longer the relationship is (Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2007). Thus, the fact that some MSM experience DPs as more wanted and/or more consensual when the DPs are received later in a conversation may reflect their desire to develop trust and a "relationship" with another dating app user before engaging in a sexual activity. This finding suggests that MSM may apply components of consent frameworks to their online interactions, even if they are unaware that they are doing so.

Experience with MSM Dating Apps. In my analysis, I found that the amount of time that MSM had been using dating apps impacted their experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. Pingel and colleagues (2013) similarly found that young MSM became more open to sexual interactions with other MSM over time. MSM learn sexual scripts from other MSM that they interact with online (Simon & Gagnon, 2003). Since unsolicited DPs are prevalent among MSM dating app users (Paasonen, Light, & Jarrett, 2019; Marcotte et al., 2020), MSM experience unsolicited DPs as a sexual script and an acceptable way to interact with other dating app users. Thus, MSM understand the phenomenon of sending unsolicited DPs as a "social norm" (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977) of MSM dating app culture. However, unsolicited DPs are a form of TFSV. This suggests that the more experience an individual has with MSM dating apps, the more they have grown accustom to the sexual scripts and social norms that have embedded TFSV

within MSM dating app culture. This further suggests that the more experience an individual has with MSM dating apps, the more they condone and perpetuate norms that sustain TFSV.

Sexual Arousal. Participants reported that their level of sexual arousal made a difference in their experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. Many MSM use dating apps specifically for sexual purposes (Albury et al., 2019) and if their purpose is to secure a sexual interaction, a sexual advance from another MSM dating app user may be welcomed. Tziallas (2015) explained that receiving DPs on dating apps is exciting for MSM because the DP represents possibility. Dating apps connect users within close geographic proximity, which means that when an MSM dating app user receives an unsolicited DP, the sender is physically located near the recipient. Thus, for MSM who are on dating apps in pursuit of sexual activity, the receipt of an unsolicited DP signals the potential to meet someone for an in-person sexual encounter – and perhaps soon (Licoppe, Rivière, & Morel, 2015). With this in mind, and considering my findings from Study 1, MSM may disregard the non-consensual nature of unsolicited DPs and forgo consent negotiations when presented with the possibility of having an immediate in-person sexual encounter.

Attractiveness. The attractiveness of the person who sent an unsolicited DP made a difference in participants' experiences, as did the attractiveness of the DP itself. This is not surprising as research has shown that the attractiveness of a man is important to MSM (e.g., Morrison, Morrison, & Sager, 2004; Siever, 1994; Gettelman & Thompson, 1993). Research has also shown that MSM dating app users objectify other MSM dating app users (Anderson, Holland, Koc, & Haslam 2018; Tziallas, 2015) and that MSM prioritize a man's physical appearance (Kozak, Frankenhauser, & Roberts, 2009). Thus, since MSM perceive and experience unsolicited DPs differently according to the attractiveness of a user and/or their DP, this finding suggests that MSM minimize or dismiss the unwanted or non-consensual nature of unsolicited DPs in favor of having a sexual interaction with an attractive MSM.

Although unsolicited DPs are a form of TFSV (Henry & Powell, 2018; Powell & Henry, 2017), MSM are willing to receive unsolicited DPs when they are sexually aroused or when the MSM and/or the DP is attractive. Thus, there are circumstances in which MSM dating app users perceive this form of TFSV, unsolicited DPs, as desirable. Of course, the belief that "violence is seen as sexy" is a core component of rape culture (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993, p. vii). While I discuss rape culture later in this chapter, I want to emphasize that when MSM dating app users excuse the unwanted and non-consensual receipt of unsolicited DPs because of sexual arousal and/or attractiveness, they uphold and perpetuate a key tenet of rape culture.

Sending Unsolicited Dick Pics

Participants reported several motivations for sending unsolicited DPs. Many of these align with previous research, including that MSM send DPs to get the recipient's attention (Paasonen, Light, & Jarrett, 2019), sexually arouse themselves (Oswald et al., 2019; Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018), and brag and compliment the recipient (Mandau, 2019). Previous research also found that MSM send unsolicited DPs in hopes that the recipient will reciprocate with sexual images of their own (Oswald et al., 2019). This means that MSM dating app users may send unsolicited DPs to coerce other MSM into engaging in a sexual interaction.

Since some participants sent unsolicited DPs to solicit sexual images from the recipient, my findings from Study 2 come together and demonstrate that, as evident from the conduct of the sender (e.g., coercion) and the experiences of the recipient (e.g., harassment), unsolicited DPs are a form of TFSV. This finding is supported by previous research, which found that online sexual coercion is one form of TFSV (Henry & Powell, 2018) and sending unsolicited DPs is another form of TFSV (Henry & Powell, 2018; Powell & Henry, 2017).

With this in mind and recognizing the motivations for sending unsolicited DPs that I presented above (i.e., Paasonen, Light, & Jarrett, 2019; Oswald et al., 2019; Hayes & Dragiewicz,

2018; Mandau, 2019), it becomes clear that MSM who send unsolicited DP justify their behavior by prioritizing their needs over the needs of the recipient. They assume the recipient's consent (Hollway, 1998; Klesse, 2016) and rely on a lack of resistance from the recipient (Beres, Herold, & Maitland, 2004; Beres, Senn, & McCaw, 2014). As such, MSM who send unsolicited DPs may not perceive their actions as acts of sexual violence.

MSM dating app users feel liberated in their online sexual interactions (Race, 2015; Suler, 2004) and, as I explained above, they perceive unsolicited DPs as part of a sexual script (McKie, 2015; Simon & Gagnon, 2003) and as a social norm of MSM dating app culture (Race, 2015; Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). Thus, MSM dating app users may also minimize the act of sending unsolicited DPs and excuse their behavior because of the sexual scripts and social norms present in MSM dating app culture.

Summary of Study 2

Findings from Study 2 demonstrate that unsolicited DPs are a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence. MSM dating app users hold beliefs about unsolicited DPs and engage in online practices that have trivialized and perpetuated this form of TFSV. As such, MSM are complicit in an online dating culture that excuses male sexual aggression and frames sexual violence as "sexy" (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993). For these reasons, and for reasons I detail below, unsolicited DPs are a manifestation of rape culture on MSM dating apps.

Study 3: Rape Culture

Findings from Study 3 revealed two main ways in which rape culture manifests on MSM dating apps: unwanted sexual messages and unwanted sexual images. Unsolicited DPs, as an example of unwanted sexual images, were also identified as a manifestation of rape culture. These manifestations are not surprising, given that the main ways MSM interact on dating apps is

through messages and images. What is interesting is that participants noted that rape culture can manifest through *both* messages and images. Since participants recognized that rape culture can manifest through different types of digital artefacts, this finding suggests that MSM dating app users may be able identify manifestations of rape culture in other types of digital artefacts, such as audio recordings, videos, and animation.

Participants also noted that rape culture manifests in less visible ways, such as through societal systems and beliefs that condone and perpetuate sexual violence. For example, participants described MSM dating app users who presumed their consent, engaged in sexually aggressive behaviors, and made threats against them. These practices of assuming consent (Hollway, 1998; Klesse, 2016), encouraging male sexual aggression (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993), and making threats of sexual violence (Powell & Henry, 2017) comprise some of the many behaviors that have been identified as part of a rape culture (e.g., Henry & Powell, 2014; Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993).

The behaviors and conduct that participants described, along with unwanted sexual messages and images, constitute online manifestations of rape culture that are not unique to MSM or dating apps. Thus, these findings suggest that MSM may be able to recognize manifestations of rape culture in other online spaces and in other online interactions.

Participants also identified manifestations of rape culture that extended beyond MSM dating apps. These manifestations included image-based sexual abuse, harassment, stalking, coercion, and sexual assault, to name a few. Some of the manifestations that participants identified are specifically and uniquely forms of TFSV. For example, one participant expressed concerns that MSM dating app users could determine where he lived using the app's geolocating function. This participant may have been referring to what Powell and Henry (2017) described as the use of digital technologies to perpetrate a sexual assault. Examples such as this one highlight

how technology has created new problems related to sexual violence that did not previously exist (Shariff & DeMartini, 2015; Powell & Henry, 2017).

Some of the manifestations of rape culture that participants identified are more "traditional" forms of in-person sexual violence. Harassment, stalking, coercion, and sexual assault are types of sexual violence that can be perpetrated in person. These manifestations of rape culture do not necessitate the use of technology, though they can be facilitated via technology (Powell & Henry, 2017).

All of the manifestations that participants discussed had already been identified in the literature on rape culture (e.g., Henry & Powell, 2014; Powell & Henry, 2017). My analysis did not reveal a previously unknown manifestation of rape culture that is unique to MSM. Despite this, findings from Study 3 demonstrated the ways in which MSM experience rape culture online and in person.

MSM in this study disclosed sexual violence that they experienced through their use of dating apps. Some participants described situations in which they had not consented to a sexual activity or were coerced into engaging in a sexual activity. Several participants talked about incidents of in-person sexual violence, including forced oral sex, physical male aggression, sexual assault, and rape. These findings reaffirm that sexual violence comes in many forms (Kelly, 1988) and show that MSM can experience different forms of sexual violence when meeting dating app users in person.

MSM do not always identify themselves as victims or survivors of sexual violence (Braun et al., 2009; Davies, 2002). There are also rape myths that perpetuate stereotypes and assumptions about sexual violence against MSM in ways that minimize and dismiss MSM's experiences of rape culture (Mortimer et al., 2019). Thus, my findings demonstrate that, whether

or not MSM perceive of themselves as victims/survivors, MSM do experience sexual violence and they do experience rape culture.

The online and in-person manifestations of rape culture uncovered in Study 3 illustrate that rape culture is not limited to virtual or physical spaces. This finding was further evident as participants reflected on the extent to which MSM dating apps facilitate rape culture. Some participants argued that the affordances of MSM dating apps makes it easier for rape culture to manifest. Indeed, the affordances of online spaces can liberate people to say and do things they might not do in person (Suler, 2004; Race, 2015). However, dating apps offer in-app mechanisms like blocking and reporting that MSM can utilize to flag or remove inappropriate content and behavior (Duguay, Burgess, & Light, 2017). Of course, dating app users also have the ability to disconnect from an app whenever they want.

This suggests that MSM dating apps can facilitate rape culture and hinder rape culture. The nature and affordances of online spaces can liberate people, so they act more freely – and perhaps more violently – in virtual spaces than they do in physical spaces. However, the same spaces offer people mechanisms and tools that they would not have access to in person – thereby making virtual spaces safer than physical spaces. Recognizing this last point, dating app companies have the opportunity to leverage online affordances in ways that can address and mitigate rape culture. I give recommendations for how they can do this in Chapter 8.

Participants asserted that MSM dating apps were merely a space where rape culture manifests, not the only space where rape culture manifests. They said that rape culture can manifest in any space, including online and in person. As such, participants explained that manifestations of rape culture on MSM dating apps were a reflection of user behaviors, not of the apps themselves. Research has shown that people's experiences online are a continuation of the experiences they have in physical space, not separate from them (boyd, 2010; Mowlabocus,

2010). The people who occupy the app-space bring with them beliefs and behaviors that sustain and perpetuate rape culture. This finding underlines the fact that rape culture is ever-present in society and can be found wherever people congregate and interact, including in person, online, and across/between those spaces.

Of course, this presents a challenge when trying to address rape culture. Although I suggested above – and argue in Chapter 8 – that dating app companies can create and implement tools on their platforms to address rape culture, such mechanisms do not get to the root of the problem. Rape culture is comprised of systems and beliefs entrenched in society that trivialize, condone, and perpetuate sexual violence (Shariff, 2017; Powell & Henry, 2017; Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993). Thus, to truly address rape culture, people need to dismantle the systems and beliefs that sustain sexual violence.

One challenge in addressing rape culture against MSM is understanding that MSM can be both victims and perpetrators of sexual violence (Powell et al., 2020; Henry et al., 2017). To this point, several participants in my study explained that they had experienced sexual violence in person and one participant admitted that he had perpetrated sexual violence in person. MSM occupy a unique social position in society because they possess both majority and minority identities. MSM have power and privilege because of their male identity, but MSM are also targets of violence because of their sexual and/or gender identities. Thus, to address rape culture against MSM, MSM need to be educated about the violence they commit against one another. MSM must engage in critical self-reflections about the norms embedded in and perpetuated within their communities and culture, including in the culture of MSM dating apps.

At this point, I return to Shariff's (2017) definition of rape culture in which she argued that sexual violence is condoned, perpetuated, and normalized at the institutional level, community level, and individual level. Addressing sexual violence against MSM requires

coordinated and collaborative action. In Chapter 8, I offer recommendations for how educational institutions, community organizations, institutions of law and policy, and dating app companies can take action. In the following section, I describe the actions that I have taken and that communities I am involved with have taken to address sexual violence against MSM. In doing so, I review the applications and implications of my findings.

<div align="center">**Applications and Implications**</div>

These findings contribute to an academic understanding of the nature and extent of sexual violence against MSM, though they also inform practice. Below, I highlight some of the ways that I have applied my findings to address sexual violence and educate people about sexual consent. I begin by discussing various university-based and community-based educational interventions. Next, I explain how I have disseminated my findings to raise public awareness, including through a provincial campaign on sexual consent. I also discuss how I have shared my findings with technology companies, including Facebook Canada. Throughout this section, I consider the implications of my findings in these fields. Thus, the applications and implications I highlight in this section lay the foundation for recommendations that I make in Chapter 8.

Educational Interventions

Over the past four years, I have used my findings to educate people about consent, sexual violence, and rape culture through university programs and community organizations. Below, I give examples of some of these educational interventions. Specifically, I discuss training programs and workshops for university students, volunteers, and pre-service teachers. I also share educational interventions I engage with through community organizations, including organizations for community health and recreational sports.

Orientation and Frosh

Campus Life & Engagement (CL&E) is a McGill University student services office that organizes the annual new-student orientation activities (CL&E, 2021). I work at CL&E and train the hundreds of undergraduate students who are involved in Orientation and Frosh every year.

As noted above, my findings have implications on how people think about and practice consent. My findings also shed light on how people communicate, negotiate, and enact consent. I integrated my findings into the training programs to engage students in the complexities of negotiating consent online and in person. In doing so, I demystified consent practices and made them more accessible to undergraduate students.

My findings are timely, which facilitates their uptake with young people. Findings resonate with students because they reflect their realities, notably, connecting with people through dating apps. As this example demonstrates, my findings have implications on the development of training programs and the education of young people.

Survivor Support Training

The Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education (OSVRSE) is McGill University's office that provides support for people who have experienced sexual violence (OSVRSE, 2021). In September 2019, I was recruited by OSVRSE to share my data in a training for their undergraduate student volunteers. OSVRSE's undergraduate student volunteers engage in outreach and events to educate their peers about sexual violence and consent.

I applied what I had learned about sexual violence to train the OSVRSE volunteers on how to identify issues of consent and incidents of sexual violence, including TFSV, in their peers' experiences. As such, I helped them recognize when and how they can encourage a student who experienced sexual violence to seek support from OSVRSE. My findings have implications on how to train people to identify TFSV and intervene in cases where they witness TFSV.

Workshop for Pre-Service Teachers

In April 2019, I was invited by McGill's Faculty of Education to participate in the annual professional development for pre-service teachers graduating that semester. Similar to the OSVRSE workshop, I applied my findings to teach them about consent, sexual violence, and rape culture. In this training, however, I tailored the context of my findings so they would be applicable to the experiences of primary and secondary school teachers. I also simplified some of the concepts so they would be appropriate for teaching primary and secondary students.

In the workshop, I offered suggestions for how teachers could disseminate this information through everyday lessons with their lessons. I also explained how negotiations, for example, help people set boundaries and navigate issues of safety. As such, my findings have implications not only on training programs but also other school-based educational interventions, notably, sex education programs.

University-Wide Sexual Violence Program

"It Takes All Of Us" (ITAOU) is McGill University's sexual violence education program that is compulsory for all students, staff, and professors (ITAOU, 2021). The program was mandated by the Quebec government in 2017 as a response to concerns about sexual violence in higher education (Quebec, 2017). Quebec is one of several provinces and territories in Canada to mandate that universities have stand-alone sexual violence policies (Busby, forthcoming).

Since April 2020, I have been working with staff from OSVRSE, Teaching & Learning Services (TLS, 2021) and the Office of the Associate Provost (Equity and Academic Policies) (Equity at McGill, 2021) to improve and update ITAOU and the policies associated with is. I have also applied my findings to co-develop a module for ITAOU that is focused on TFSV.

My findings on TFSV have implications for university-wide sexual violence programs. And as higher education institutions revise their government-mandated sexual violence policies (Busby, forthcoming), my findings can apply to policy development as well.

Community Workshop

In April 2018, I worked with staff from RÉZO to develop and facilitate a workshop about sexual violence against MSM. RÉZO is a Montreal-based community organization that supports the health and wellbeing of MSM, including transgender MSM (RÉZO, 2021a). The majority of RÉZO's services are offered in French.

The RÉZO workshop, like the workshops for OSVRSE and the Faculty of Education, highlighted my findings on sexual violence related to dating app use. However, in the RÉZO workshop, I emphasized sexual scripts and norms embedded within MSM dating app culture since the workshop attendees were exclusively MSM. During the discussion portion of the workshop, attendees talked about how their experiences of TFSV were reflected in my findings.

The workshop provided an opportunity for MSM to process their experiences, disclose incidents of sexual violence they had experienced, and connect with people who had similar experiences. My findings can be applied to educate MSM about sexual violence, though they also have implications on community building and activist work.

Sexual Violence in Sports

The Toronto Triggerfish Water Polo club is a recreational sports club whose members are primarily gay men, though open to all LGBTQ+ people and allies (Triggerfish, n.d.). Since October 2020, I have been working with them to design and implement a training on consent and sexual violence for their approximately 120 members.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the club is currently conducting all of their meetings and events online. Thus, I am creating a training that includes general information about sexual

violence as well as specific information about TFSV. And since the majority of their members are MSM, I am integrating my specific findings that shed light on the sexual violence that MSM experience.

This is one example of how my findings have educational implications and can apply to communities outside of academia. Furthermore, since homophobia, toxic masculinity, and gender-based have been present in sport for decades (e.g., Messner & Sabo, 1994; McCray, 2015), my findings have implications on how recreational sports clubs can address rape culture in their communities and create safer spaces for MSM, LGBTQ+ people, and their allies.

Public Awareness

In addition to education, my research findings have implications for raising public awareness about consent, sexual violence, and rape culture. Below, I detail some of the ways in which I have disseminated my findings to raise public awareness, including through a provincial campaign and media interviews.

Provincial Sexual Consent Campaign

As I mentioned above, RÉZO is a community organization that specializes in providing support for cisgender and transgender MSM (RÉZO, 2021a). In July 2018, I worked with RÉZO to develop their Quebec-wide provincial campaign aimed at raising awareness about sexual consent among MSM. Inspired by the #MeToo campaign, the #ÇaExiste campaign (in English, "It [consent] exists") seeks to demystify consent by emphasizing that consent among MSM exists and is important for safe and enjoyable sexual experiences. This campaign also uses the hashtag #ÇaPognePas ("It doesn't work") and #LaPognesTu ("Do you get it?") to call attention to non-consensual sexual conduct among MSM (RÉZO, 2021b). All of the campaign posters and images ask, "Tu veux pogner?" ("Do you want to catch [someone]?") in an effort to make consent-

seeking socially desirable. One poster explains that sending unsolicited DPs is "uncool" while another instructs MSM not to penetrate another MSM without his consent (RÉZO, 2021b).

As evident from RÉZO's campaign, my findings can be applied to raise awareness about consent and sexual violence among MSM and in communities of MSM dating app users. RÉZO's campaign also shows that my findings are applicable outside of English-speaking Canada. This implies that French-speaking organizations and international organizations can use my findings to raise awareness in other languages and in other countries.

Media Interviews

In September 2018, I gave a live radio interview with Marcy Markusa of CBC Radio One on a sextortion case involving two Tinder users in which the man threatened to distribute sexual images of the woman (Markoza, 2018). In the interview, we talked about gender-based violence and discussed dating apps' role in facilitating TFSV.

In July 2019, I was interviewed by the French media company KOMITID, which focuses on LGBTQ+ news, to discuss issues of consent among MSM involved in the bar and club scene (Pedram, 2019). I explained that MSM may presume another MSM's consent (Hollway, 1998; Klesse, 2016), thereby thinking it is acceptable to touch or grope other MSM in bars and clubs. I also emphasized that people who identify as minorities within MSM and LGBTQ+ communities may experience additional victimization in bars and clubs because of their intersectional identities (Crenshaw, 1991).

Lastly, in December 2019, I recorded an interview with *The Gays Are Revolting*, a popular Australian podcast that discusses social and cultural issues relevant to gay men. I shared my findings about negotiations of consent among MSM dating app users and talked about unsolicited DPs as a form of TFSV (The Gays Are Revolting, 2019). The hosts were particularly interested in talking about unsolicited DPs and we spent much of the interview discussing them.

As these interviews demonstrate, my findings have implications on heterosexual people's app practices (Markusa, 2018) and the ways in which LGBTQ+ interact in places like bars and clubs (Pedram, 2019). My interview with *The Gays Are Revolting* also shows the MSM public has an interest in learning about consent and sexual violence (The Gays Are Revolting, 2019).

Technology

My findings have implications for technology companies, especially dating app companies. Below, I discuss two situations in which I shared my findings, one with Facebook Canada and the other with Besedo, a content moderation company.

Facebook Canada

Facebook Canada is a partner on the IMPACTS Project. In October 2018, they invited me to provide feedback on the online dating platform they were developing, Facebook Dating, prior to its public release. I suggested offering users more diverse gender and sexuality options and explained how TFSV could manifest online through unwanted sexual messages and images. Facebook representatives explained that they had already removed users' ability to send images via Facebook Dating. I offered them other recommendations, which I detail in Chapter 8. While I am unsure about the extent to which Facebook Canada incorporated my suggestions into Facebook Dating, this experience highlights that my findings are applicable to online dating. It also shows that my findings have implications on how social media companies can address TFSV and how companies can work to provide safer online spaces to their users.

Besedo Content Moderation

Besedo is a content moderation company that sells products and services addressing unwanted nudity, cyberbullying, and sexual harassment (Besedo, 2021). Their products and services, which include automated filters, artificial intelligence, and manual content moderation,

have been used by Meetic, a dating app company, as well as eBay (Besedo, 2021). In April 2018, Besedo interviewed me to learn more about sexual harassment and rape culture (Besedo, 2018).

My experience with Besedo shows that my findings are applicable to technology companies other than social media and dating app companies. My findings have implications on how Besedo and other content moderation companies can identify and mitigate TFSV through automated technologies as well as manual approaches.

Summary

This chapter began with supplementary information about the methods I used in my research. I then presented key findings from the studies in Chapters 4–6, analyzed them, and connected them to literature in the field. In doing so, I explained how the findings from each of my three studies connected to the overarching goal of my dissertation, which is to highlight and address the nature and extent of sexual violence against MSM dating app users.

Following that analysis, I highlighted ways in which I applied my findings to educational interventions in universities, schools, and community organizations. I also discussed applications in raising public awareness and working with technology companies. Throughout that section, I considered the implications of my findings to different fields. My findings show great promise to inform the fields of education, law and policy, and technology.

Upcoming Chapter 8 provides my concluding thoughts about sexual violence that MSM experience through their use of dating apps and provides recommendations. I also discuss the limitations of my research and offer suggestions for future research.

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CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In this dissertation, I highlighted and addressed the nature and extent of sexual violence against MSM that is facilitated through their use of dating apps. In Chapter 2, I examined literature on sexual violence, technology-facilitated sexual violence, unsolicited dick pics, sexual consent, and rape culture. In Chapter 3, I explained my method, interpretive phenomenology, and I also outlined my epistemology, research procedure, and methods of analysis, which were interpretive phenomenological analysis and thematic analysis. In Chapter 4, I presented Study 1 on MSM dating app users' conceptualizations and negotiations of sexual consent. In Chapter 5, I presented Study 2 on MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics. In Chapter 6, I presented Study 3 on manifestations of rape culture and I detailed the ways in which MSM dating app users experienced rape culture online and in person.

In Chapter 7, I analyzed the key findings from the three studies and explained how those findings addressed the overarching goal of this dissertation. Chapter 7 also included a discussion of the applications and implications of my findings, which laid the foundation for the recommendations I present in this chapter.

Chapter 8 is the final chapter of my dissertation. Below, I summarize and reflect on the findings from Studies 1–3 (see Chapters 4–6) by offering my conclusions. I draw attention to some limitations of my research and offer recommendations for several fields, including education, law and policy, and technology. I also provide suggestions for future research and future researchers. This chapter ends with my closing thoughts about sexual violence that is facilitated through MSM's use of dating apps.

Conclusions

When I started my research, I was interested in examining MSM's experiences of sexual violence. Through a review of the literature on sexual violence, it became apparent that there were gaps, such that the literature did not consider how MSM use dating apps to connect with other MSM and pursue sexual interactions online and in person. While I found many studies that examined MSM dating app users' experiences, few investigated issues of safety and consent. In recognizing this overarching gap between the literature on sexual violence and the literature on MSM dating apps, I began investigating how MSM experience sexual violence through their use of dating apps. For my dissertation research, I took a three-pronged approach to highlight and address the nature and extent of sexual violence against MSM that is facilitated through MSM's use of dating apps. I detail my conclusions from each of the three studies below.

Sexual Consent

Study 1 from Chapter 4 revealed that MSM dating app users were able to identify sexual consent frameworks and aspects of sexual consent, yet how they applied consent to their online sexual interactions differed. First, some participants did not apply consent to their online sexual interactions at all. Other participants equated consent with connecting to the app-space, perceiving of consent as a discrete action. There were participants who explained that they relied on silence and behavioral cues to communicate and enact consent. Lastly, some participants applied consent frameworks to their online interactions, explicitly communicating and negotiating consent with other MSM dating app users. The variations in MSM dating app users' consent practices demonstrated that, although MSM understand consent frameworks, they may not apply those frameworks to their experiences, or they may apply an adapted version of those frameworks to their experiences. There are many possible explanations for these variations,

including how MSM conceptualize sex and why they use dating apps. It is also possible that the nature and affordances of online spaces contributed to the diversity among MSM dating app users' conceptualizations and negotiations of consent online.

When preparing to meet other MSM dating app users for an in-person sexual encounter, participants interpreted the purpose and function of their online discussions differently. First, some participants perceived of their online negotiations of consent as a contract that outlined exactly what would happen when meeting in person. Second, some participants thought that their online negotiations served as a temporary confirmation of consent, that would be confirmed by actually meeting in person. These participants employed less explicit or non-explicit communication to express consent and, consequently, made assumptions about their partner's consent. Third, some participants perceived of consent as continuous such that online negotiations were only one iteration of the ongoing consent process. These participants understood consent as spanning across and between their online and in-person interactions. Depending on their perception of in-app chats as a precursor to in-person sexual encounters, MSM dating app users conceptualize and practice consent differently.

Given the possibility of experiencing physical assault in person and the impossibility of experiencing physical assault online, participants felt that it was more important to seek out and establish consent when interacting in person. Despite this, many participants seemed to prefer to negotiate consent on dating apps. This finding suggests that MSM understand consent discourses and recognize the importance of consent, though they feel more comfortable discussing consent than in person. In fact, some MSM may intentionally avoid talking about consent in person, as is demonstrated by MSM who conceptualize and practice consent as a contract.

There was one participant who asserted that MSM do not apply consent to any of their sexual interactions, neither online nor in person. Although only one participant felt this way, the

range in participants' conceptualizations and practices emphasize that MSM dating app users have different understandings and experiences of consent.

Overall, findings from this study revealed the diversity among MSM dating app users' consent practices online and in person. These findings have implications on how MSM may experience sexual violence and/or perpetrate sexual violence through their use of dating apps. These findings also have implications for how MSM may minimize or dismiss incidents of sexual violence, both in their experiences and in the experiences of other MSM dating app users.

Unsolicited Dick Pics

Study 2, which I presented in Chapter 5, investigated MSM dating app users' experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited dick pics (DPs). Some participants explained that unsolicited DPs were non-consensual "by definition" and described unsolicited DPs as a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). Despite this, many participants dismissed their experiences of receiving unsolicited DPs. Many participants also minimized the act of sending unsolicited DPs, emphasizing that their online behavior was generally not harmful, serious, or consequential.

Participants identified and discussed several factors that altered their experiencing of sending and receiving unsolicited DPs. They explained that these factors impacted how they felt about unsolicited DPs, for example, transforming unsolicited DPs from being experienced as unwanted or non-consensual into being perceived as desirable, attractive, and sexually arousing.

This finding suggests that while MSM dating app users may recognize unsolicited DPs as non-consensual sexual conduct and/or may characterize them as a form of TFSV, MSM dating app users have minimized and condoned the phenomenon of unsolicited DPs. Unsolicited DPs are embedded in the sexual scripts and social norms of MSM dating app culture, practices that MSM dating app users learn and internalize over time and, subsequently, normalize and

perpetuate in their online interactions with other MSM dating app users. This finding suggests that the phenomenon of unsolicited DPs is deeply entrenched within MSM dating app culture and also suggests that MSM dating app users are often complicit in supporting beliefs, practices, and systems that trivialize and perpetuate TFSV against MSM.

Rape Culture

The third study, which I presented in Chapter 6, examined manifestations of rape culture on MSM dating apps. Participants identified unwanted sexual messages and unwanted sexual images are two common manifestations of rape culture specific to online spaces. They also discussed several behaviors that constitute manifestations of rape culture, including stalking, harassment, aggression, coercion, and presumptions of consent. However, participants explained these behaviors were not unique to their online interactions; rather, they had experienced these types of sexually inappropriate behaviors in their in-person interactions with MSM. In recognizing that rape culture manifests in the form of digital artefacts like unwanted sexual messages and images as well as in the form of online and offline behaviors, participants asserted that rape culture exists wherever people exist. MSM recognize that dating apps are a space like any other and those spaces conform to the norms that people set for them. Thus, given the many manifestations of rape culture identified in this study, it became clear that MSM dating app users embody the beliefs and behaviors characteristic of a rape culture.

This was apparent through participants' in-person experiences of sexual violence. Several participants in this study disclosed sexual violence that another MSM dating app used had perpetrated against them, including forced oral sex, sexual assault, and rape. There was also one participated who admitted that he had committed an act of in-person sexual violence against a

casual sex partner. MSM occupy unique positions in society where they can be both victims and perpetrators of sexual violence, including online and in person.

This is one of the challenges in addressing rape culture against MSM, since MSM may not recognize when they have experienced sexual violence and/or when they have perpetuated sexual violence. To address rape culture against MSM, MSM need to understand how they perpetuate sexual violence through their individual actions and how they participate in and promote norms that uphold systems of sexual violence on dating apps and in society. Beginning with individual interactions, MSM can address rape culture by engaging in critical reflections on their beliefs and scrutinizing the potentially harmful behaviors they engage in with other MSM. This work can continue by deconstructing and reconstructing the scripts and norms embedded within the socio-cultural practices of MSM.

It is important to note that the role of MSM dating app companies was scrutinized in this study. However, participants were unsure as to what extent dating app companies are accountable for TFSV that happens through their platforms. Some participants asserted that the nature and affordances of the Internet contribute to app spaces where MSM engage in more liberated, and perhaps more violent, sexual interactions than in-person sexual interactions. Other participants asserted that it is easier to confront sexual violence online than in person because of in-app mechanisms and the ability to disconnect when uncomfortable, thereby positioning app spaces as safer than in-person spaces. There is truth in both of these assertions and, thus, we can conclude that MSM dating apps both facilitate rape culture and hinder rape culture.

Dating apps companies are responsible for addressing rape culture against MSM. These companies have power to make changes at the institutional level. Of course, institutional changes must also be enacted across all areas of society in order to fully address rape culture against MSM. Dating app companies can take immediate action by updating their software, improving

their reporting systems, and offering support and resources through their platforms. I outline my recommendations for dating app companies later in this chapter.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this research. In the MSM Interviews (see Chapter 1), I did not provide participants with definitions of sexual consent or rape culture, nor did I correct them if their ideas differed from the models and definitions I used in my research (e.g., Shariff, 2017). While I have no reason to believe that the variations in participants' understandings of these concepts compromised my study, future studies could improve upon this by providing MSM with a model of sexual consent or a definition of rape culture and asking them to identity how those concepts manifest through their use of dating apps.

I asked participants to describe their experiences of sending and receiving unsolicited DPs. All of the participants discussed receiving unsolicited DPs, though several participants did not discuss sending unsolicited DPs. Whether or not this was intentional, I did not press those participants about their experiences of sending DPs. I had enough data because of the 25 interviews I conducted, though I may have missed interesting and important data about MSM dating app users' experiences of sending unsolicited DPs.

Findings from this dissertation may not be applicable to all MSM, since the majority of my participants were white, only one participant was over 60 years old, and no participants identified as transgender. For example, studies have shown that racialized MSM experience racism and violence that white MSM do not (Robinson, 2015). Seniors aged 65 and older who use online dating have been exploited, harassed, and physically harmed (Wion & Loeb, 2015). Trans and gender diverse dating app users experience harassment, transphobia, and fetishization (Albury, Dietzel, et al., 2020). While my findings are relevant to MSM dating app users in

general, they make lack some of the nuances required to fully understand how MSM of different identities experience sexual violence through their use of dating apps.

Although MSM comprise a subset of the LGBTQ+ population, my findings may not apply to broader LGBTQ+ communities. Notably, women who have sex with women face unique gender-based oppression and abuse that MSM do not (Ferris & Duguay, 2020; Murray & Sapnar Ankerson, 2016). And, while some MSM may identify as transgender, trans and gender diverse people experience identity-specific violence that cisgender MSM do not (Albury, Dietzel, et al., 2020). It was not within the scope of this dissertation to consider if, or how, my findings could apply to LGBTQ+ people more generally, though this limitation is worth noting in order to avoid making assumptions about sexual violence that non-MSM LGBTQ+ people experience through their use of apps.

Lastly, with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible that the ways in which MSM dating app users think about and practice consent has changed. Health and safety are at the forefront of people's minds and dating app companies have encouraged their users to refrain from meeting in person (Myles, Duguay, & Dietzel, 2021). Thanks to the pandemic, dating app users may be more aware of consent negotiations and the importance of setting boundaries, especially when meeting in person. This is not to suggest that my findings are inapplicable to a world post-COVID; rather, my findings may contrast potential shifts in how MSM and other dating app users have conceptualized and negotiated consent since the pandemic. In this sense, my findings offer a benefit as they can now serve as a record of how MSM dating app users thought about and practiced consent before the COVID-19 pandemic. I explore this idea further later in the chapter when I offer my suggestions for future research.

<div align="center">**Recommendations**</div>

As I explained in Chapter 7, my findings have implications for educational interventions, public campaigns, community work, and technological developments. In this section, I offer recommendations for several fields. I begin with recommendations for universities and schools, and then discuss recommendations for community organizations. I also give recommendations for police and developments in law and policy. I close this section with recommendations for dating app companies.

Universities

There are several ways in which students and administrators can integrate my findings into universities. As discussed in Chapter 7, training programs for students should address misconceptions about consent and teach students how to properly communicate, negotiate, and enact consent. Universities should also move away from slogans like "yes means yes" and "no means no" as those are outdated and oversimplify consent (Harris, 2018). Instead, universities should embrace the complexities of consent and teach students about continuous consent, emphasizing that consent spans across online and offline spaces.

Training programs should inform students about the sexual violence resources available at the university, the procedures for reporting sexual violence, and the policies that address sexual violence. It is important that training programs take an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1991) to ensure that students understand the disproportionate rates and impacts of sexual violence on marginalized communities, including LGBTQ+ communities. Training programs should also include information about getting involved in advocacy, activism, and other work against sexual violence so that students are encouraged to take action.

Universities with sexual violence education programs should ensure their programs include information about TFSV. University administrators, staff, and professors should be trained on TFSV so they can mitigate and address TFSV.

All universities should scrutinize their policies and procedures to ensure that rape culture is not embedded within their systems. For example, universities should dismantle barriers to accessing sexual violence resources and actively encourage a culture that believes and respects people who come forward with experiences of sexual violence.

Primary and Secondary Schools

Similar to universities, primary and secondary schools should provide training programs to educate people about TFSV, including administrators, teachers, staff, and parents, if possible. These stakeholders should work together to identify and address issues of sexual violence and TFSV. If schools do not have resources for people who have experienced sexual violence and TFSV, they should develop them and put them in place immediately. For the schools that already have resources available, they should verify that their resources are accessible, reporting processes are easy to follow, and that there are no barriers to reporting.

Schools should inform their students about the importance of safe and consensual interactions, including online and in person. Students should feel comfortable and confident discussing consent and they should understand the importance of respecting boundaries when someone communicates hesitation or disinterest for engaging in a sexual activity.

Schools needs to be inclusive of MSM and LGBTQ+ people. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) surveyed 16,713 LGBTQ students in the United States and found that 59.1% felt unsafe at school because of their sexual identity and 86.3% experienced harassment or assault based on their identity (GLSEN,

2020). GLSEN also found that 56.6% of LGBTQ students who were harassed or assaulted at school did not report the incident to the school – most commonly because students did not have faith in the school to intervene effectively and because students thought the situation might become worse if they reported (GLSEN, 2020). It is critically important that schools provide safe spaces for all LGBTQ+ students.

To do so, I recommend that teachers should reference LGBTQ+ issues throughout their curricula. Teachers and staff can normalize the fact LGBTQ+ students use technology to explore their identities, develop community, and foster connections with other LGBTQ+ people (e.g., Pingel et al., 2013; Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014).

Sex Education

Sex education programs should address the realities of how students connect and meet, notably, through online spaces like dating apps. Students' use of technology should be openly discussed in sex education programs, including the ways in which students use technology to engage in sexual activity with their peers. Students should understand that consent is necessary for any sexual activity, including those facilitated via technology.

Sex education programs must include information about LGBTQ+ people. In the United States, not many programs are inclusive. The Human Rights Campaign found that only California, Colorado, Iowa, Washington and Washington, D.C., have state laws or regulatory guidance requiring sex education to be inclusive of LGBTQ+ people (Gill, 2015).

In Canada, sex education programs are more inclusive but can still be improved. Quebec's sex education program provides information about diverse sexual and gender identities, relationships between LGBTQ+ people, sexual consent, and sexual violence (Quebec, 2021b). However, the curriculum does not cover online sexual interactions, TFSV, or rape culture (Quebec, 2021b). Thus, while certain aspects of Quebec's sex education can serve as a model for

other states and provinces, I recommend integrating information about online negotiations of consent, students' use of dating apps, TFSV, and rape culture.

Community Organizations

Many of the education-related recommendations I outlined in the previous sections can also apply to community organizations' educational programs, volunteer training, and staff-led workshops for community members. However, there are other ways in which community organizations can improve.

I recommend community organizations, particularly community organizations that address sexual violence, expand their mandates to include efforts that address TFSV. Resources that are available to people who have experienced sexual violence should be made available and accessible to people who experience TFSV.

I would like to emphasize the point about making resources accessible. Since TFSV occurs through people's use of technology, community organizations resources should be tailored to the needs of people who experience TFSV. Community organization's services and responses should be also adapted to the realities of technology. Below, I detail a few example resources that I would recommend for community organizations.

Dating App User Guides

Community organizations can create and share dating app user guides to help people safety navigate dating apps and address TFSV. These guides could include tips for managing safety online and in person and information about resources and policies that support people who experience TFSV.

Hollaback! is an international organization aimed at addressing harassment that recently released a suite of social media safety guides (Hollaback, 2021). Each guide is specific to a social

media site, explicitly outlining the company's policies and their unique systems for reporting and blocking. *Hollaback!* has created guides for Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, among others (Hollaback, 2021). I envision community organizations developing a similar suite of user guides for dating apps. Each guide would include information about the dating app companies' policies, in-app safety features, and related resources. The guides could be made available online, though they could also be publicized through social media channels and even through dating apps themselves.

Specifically, community organizations could purchase advertisements on dating apps (e.g., Grindr, 2021a). A community organization could pay for pop-up notifications or in-app banners that advertise their safety guides. Outreach of this sort would ensure that users are aware of app-specific resources that promote their safety on that app.

Text-Based Helplines

Community organizations should offer text-based helplines that provide support to people who experience TFSV. I recommend helplines like SextEd and Kids Help Phone.

SextEd is a texting helpline that provides young people information about sex and dating (SextEd, 2019). Young people text their question to the SextEd phone number and staff members or trained volunteers respond with a specific answer and, when appropriate, links to expert advice and local health services. The text messages are received anonymously to ensure that people can ask their questions free from judgment, shame, or embarrassment. While information about consent, sexual assault, and LGBTQ+ issues are already available through SextEd, information related to TFSV and dating apps could be added.

Kids Help Phone, a national service that young people in Canada can use to receive professional counselling, referrals, and information on a range of topics, including bullying, abuse, sexting, personal relationships, mental health, and wellbeing (Kids Help Phone, 2021).

While Kids Help Phone offers information on a variety of topics, they could also expand their list to include information and resources that support people who experience TFSV.

Sexual Consent, Sexual Health, and Substance Use

In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I discussed how consumption of drugs and/or alcohol can impact MSM's consent negotiations and experiences with unsolicited DPs. While I have not framed this dissertation around sexual health, some of the research in this field is embedded in sexual health studies (e.g., Albury, Dietzel, et al., 2020; Patten et al., 2020; Numer et al., 2019; Race, 2015; Race, Murphy, Pienaar, & Lea, 2021). Studies in this field provide a framework for exploring how consent and safety among MSM intersect with substance use.

Some community organizations have also framed MSM issues of consent and safety around sexual health. Kontak is an education-for-prevention service that provides safer sex and drug materials to MSM who participate in sex parties, use drugs and other substances, and engage in kinks or fetishes (ACCM, 2021). On the Kontak website, there is a section titled "Looking Out for Each Other", in which it emphasizes that "communication and consent are key" when engaging in any type of sexual activity (Kontak, 2021).

My recommendation is for community organizations to emphasize the importance of negotiating and enacting consent in all types of sexual interactions among MSM, including sexual activities that involve the consumption of alcohol, drugs, and other substances.

Campaigns about Sexual Consent and Safety

RÉZO's #ÇaExiste campaign (RÉZO, 2021), which I discussed in Chapter 7, can serve as an example of a campaign that has effectively raised public awareness about consent and TFSV, including among MSM. I recommend other community organizations develop and implement similar public awareness campaigns.

I also recommend developing and publicizing campaigns about asking for help in unsafe situations. The Signal for Help campaign from the Canadian Women's Foundation can be used as an example of this.

Signal for Help was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic to help people who experience gender-based violence and domestic abuse (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2020). Designed as a "simple single-hand gesture that can be visually and silently displayed during video calls", the Signal for Help communicates that someone needs help but cannot openly ask for it (Canadian Women's Foundation, n.d.). This has been an important tool and I encourage people to use this Signal for Help. I also recommend developing text-based signals that could similarly communicate a need for help.

Text-based signals can take the form of code words or code phrases that people can send to signal to a friend or a community organization that they need help. The code word or phrase would need to be ordinary in the sense that an abuser would not recognize it as a signal for help. However, the code word or phrase would need to be specific and identifiable by friends or a community organization.

Through visual and text-based signals, community organizations can raise awareness to issues of public safety and provide individuals with tools they need to signal for help in cases of intimate partner abuse, sexual violence, or other harm.

Law and Policy Development

Law and policy are not my areas of expertise, nor are they within the scope of this dissertation. However, it is important to apply my findings to law and policy development. I offer a few recommendations for law and policy below, and I encourage people working in the fields

of law and policy to develop and implement updated law and policies that reflect the current realities of how people communicate and interact through technology.

University Policies

McGill University and many universities in Canada are legally required to have stand-alone policies addressing sexual violence (Busby, forthcoming). And, as we have seen with this past year of the COVID-19 pandemic, many universities in Canada and the United States are operating online, at least in some part (e.g., The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020). While there is still great uncertainty about the long-term effects of the ongoing pandemic, there is speculation about whether universities will ever return to a fully in-person model (Duncan et al., 2020). My recommendation is that universities expand their online resources and update their sexual violence policies to ensure they address TFSV.

Shariff (2017) argued that universities must reconsider and redefine the "university context" to ensure that incidents of cyberbullying and TFSV are covered by university policy. I agree. University policies should redefine the "university context" (Shariff, 2017) and structure their policies around the impacts of TFSV rather than where the TFSV occurred. In doing so, universities will prioritize the safety, health, and wellbeing of the person affected. Moreover, universities must ensure that their resources are appropriate and sensitive to the needs of people who experience TFSV.

Provincial and Federal Policies

On their website, the Quebec government recognizes that sexual assault takes many forms, and that sexual violence can be facilitated through technology. In fact, Quebec states that "sending unsolicited digital images of sexual content, such as photos of private parts (dick pics)" constitutes a form of sexual assault (Quebec, 2021a).

Sexual assault is written into the Criminal Code of Canada (2021). However, there seems to be no mention of TFSV. My recommendation is for the Canadian government and other governments to follow the direction of the Quebec government (Quebec, 2021a) by explicitly recognizing how sexual violence can happen through people's use of technology.

Police and Reporting

Research has shown that people, especially MSM and LGBTQ+ people, hesitate to report sexual violence to the police because of fears of additional victimization (e.g., Wolff & Cokely, 2007; Jones et al., 2009). It was not within the scope of this dissertation to examine the role of police in responding to and supporting people who experience sexual violence. However, I recommend critical examinations of police policies and practices to ensure that MSM and LGBTQ+ people who experience sexual violence and TFSV feel safe reporting, have opportunities to report, and do not experience barriers to reporting.

As an example, I examined the Montreal police department's website to see if there is information about TFSV. Sexual assault is listed on their website (SPVM, 2021a), but TFSV is not listed, nor is it referenced under "sexual assault" (SPVM, 2021c). My recommendation for the Montreal police department and other police departments is to recognize TFSV as a type of sexual violence and provide information about it on their websites.

I also recommend making it easier for people who experience TFSV to report an incident to the police. Again, using the Montreal police department as an example, there are only five types of reports that may be completed online: theft, mischief, lost item, graffiti, and graffiti on a vehicle (SPVM, 2021b). For a person who wants to report sexual violence, they are instructed to call 911 (in the case of a recent sexual assault) or present themselves at a local police station (if the sexual assault is not recent) (SPVM, 2021c). Since TFSV can happen online, police should allow people who experience TFSV to submit a report online.

Dating App Companies

There are many ways in which dating app companies can enhance protections for their users and address TFSV. In this section, I offer recommendations in regard to software developments, technological alerts, in-app resources, and changes to reporting procedures. In doing so, I also review some features currently available on dating apps and give suggestions for how they can be improved.

Photo Sharing

One approach that a few dating app companies have taken to addressing TFSV is not letting users share photos. Tinder and OkCupid are well-known for this. Facebook followed suit in 2018 and Facebook Dating does not allow users to send photos (Harding, 2018). Rather than moderate photo sharing among users, these companies have prohibited it.

There are a couple issues with this approach. First, prohibiting photo sharing does nothing to educate users about consent. Banning photo sharing does not mean that users will be more respectful to one another or engage in more consensual conduct. It simply means that they cannot perpetrate violence and harm through photos.

Findings from the Chapter 6 study revealed that rape culture manifests in the forms of unwanted sexual messages and images and through problematic user behaviors. Thus, even though Tinder, OkCupid, and Facebook Dating prevent TFSV in the form of images, dating app users can still perpetrate TFSV through their messages and their behaviors.

Users should be educated on how to engage in safe, consensual, and respectful interactions, including photo sharing. One recommendation is to include pop-up notifications that remind users about the app's community guidelines and the app's terms and conditions. While it may be annoying for users to receive in-app alerts about consent and safety, it is important for dating app companies to hold users accountable to certain standards of use. Dating app

companies should remind their users about what constitutes appropriate (and inappropriate) behavior and publicize the potential consequences of engaging in inappropriate behavior.

Deactivating Screenshots

Scruff does not allow people to take screenshots. On their website, Scruff explains that they are "committed to providing the most private and secure experience possible… and to increase members' confidence that their personal, identifying details won't be shared outside the app" (Scruff, 2021). Scruff also bans people from saving another user's photos or videos to their phone and forwarding photos and videos of one user to another user (Scruff, 2021). Given my findings, I think these are valuable features. Unlike Tinder, OkCupid, and Facebook Dating who completed banned photo sharing, Scruff takes a harm reduction approach. Scruff allows users to engage in sexual activities on their sites, but they have integrated software that protects users from abuse. I recommend other dating app companies take a similar approach.

Software Update

As I explained in Chapter 6, Grindr now includes the option for users to signal the extent to which they are open to receiving "NSFW Pics" (Grindr, 2021d). While this software update has flaws (e.g., the term "NSFW" is not defined; the option a user selects is expected to apply to all situations and all users; there is no immediate consequence if a user disregards another user's preference and sends pics anyway), the idea is interesting. My suggestion is to update the software so that it recognizes when users indicate that they do not want to receive "NSFW Pics" and prevents other users from sending them such images.

In-App Resources

In the past few years, some dating app companies have shared information about consent and safety on their websites. Grindr has a webpage dedicated to consent where it discusses "obtaining and providing consent" and links to consent-related resources from Planned

Parenthood and Teen Vogue (Grindr, 2021e). Tinder has a section about consent on its webpage "Dating Safety Tips" as well as links to sexual violence resources from the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), Planned Parenthood, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, and others (Tinder, 2021b).

However, the information and resources are available on the companies' websites and not available within the apps. My recommendation is for dating app companies to create a section in their apps with information and resources related to safety, consent, and sexual violence. I also recommend that, after creating this "safety section", the companies notify their users about the update so that they are aware that such information and resources exist, and they know how to access it.

Community Guidelines

Many dating app companies have outlined community guidelines for their users (e.g., Tinder, 2021a; Grindr, 2021c). Other dating app companies, like OkCupid and Chappy, have enacted "dating etiquette" pledges that users must agree to before using their platforms (OkCupid, 2017; Chappy, 2021). While I appreciate their intention, community guidelines and pledges are useless in practice if users do not adhere to them. My recommendation is for dating app companies to be proactive and hold users who break the rules accountable.

It is also important that dating app users hold one another accountable. Users should take advantage of the in-app reporting mechanisms to flag inappropriate conduct. Grindr, for example, allows people to report a user for harassment or bullying, hate speech and discrimination, nudity or pornography, impersonation, and illegal activity, among others (Grindr, 2021b). People should flag inappropriate content and report users who harass so that dating app companies can address those problems. Dating apps are community spaces and everyone who participates in those spaces should help uphold the community guidelines.

Reporting and Content Moderation

A couple of my participants explained that they had reported another user to the dating app company. However, these participants were frustrated because they did not know what, if anything, happened after they reported. My suggestion for dating app companies is to follow up with user reports. This will help people who report know that the dating app company is taking their report seriously and that they are holding users accountable when they engage in inappropriate behavior.

However, I recognize that this suggestion may not be possible for a couple of reasons. In Quebec, for example, there are privacy laws that prohibit universities from releasing information to the public about the outcome of an investigation of sexual violence (Quebec, 2021a, 2021b). As such, there may be legal restrictions that prevent dating app companies to share information about one user to another user.

I also understand that dating app companies may not have the infrastructure to follow up with users. According to *The Verge*, people working as content moderators are given very little time to review reported conduct (Newton, 2019). *The Verge* reported that Facebook's content moderators are expected to spend less than 30 seconds on each case such that they review around 1,500 cases a week (Newton, 2019). Tasking content moderators with the extra step of following up with users who reported may not be feasible or realistic.

My recommendation is for dating app companies to scrutinize their reporting processes – including how they moderate content, follow up with users who report, and hold users accountable for inappropriate behavior – and share the results with users. Dating app companies can be more transparent so users know how decisions are being made and what potential consequences await those who break the rules.

User Verification

My final recommendation is for dating app companies to have photo verification. Users send selfies of themselves holding up a certain number of fingers or winking at the camera, which are compared against that user's profile photos and reviewed by facial recognition software and/or a team of people (Carman, 2020; Tinder, 2021c). Users who pass the process receive an icon on their profile to indicate that they have been verified.

Some dating apps, like Tinder and Bumble, already use photo verification (Tinder, 2021d; Bumble, n.d.). Grindr does not currently offer photo verification, but it is the number one recommendation on the Grindr Feedback website, the company's official site where users can offer suggestions and vote on other users' suggestions (Grindr, 2018).

Granted, there are flaws with photo verification. The physical look of people can change as they grow older, cut or change their hair, or gain or lose weight (Carman, 2020). Trans and gender diverse people may intentionally change their appearance as they affirm their gender identity, which can complicate the verification process (Albury, Dietzel, et al., 2020). These are some important factors that dating app companies must keep in mind as they develop and implement photo verification. Despite the challenges and limitations, I believe that photo verification is a realistic measure that dating app companies can use to help people feel safer when connecting with users online and meeting users in person.

Future Research

There are many directions that future studies could take to further investigate the nature and extent of sexual violence against MSM. Below, I describe several areas of theoretical and empirical research that I suggest for future studies in this field.

Rape Culture against MSM and LGBTQ+ People

Rape culture is a heteronormative concept that has focused on the experiences of heterosexual women (e.g., Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993). As findings from Chapter 6 revealed, MSM participate in systems and practices that have trivialized and perpetuated sexual violence against them. There are high rates of sexual violence against MSM and women who have sex with women (Rothman, Exner, & Baughman, 2011). Research has also found that LGBTQ+ people in general experience high rates of sexual violence (e.g., Walls et al., 2019; Turell, 2000). It would be beneficial for future research to continue investigating how MSM and LGBTQ+ people experience rape culture through qualitative and quantitative studies. There is also value in taking a theoretical approach to "queer" the idea of rape culture so that the concept more accurately captures the experiences of MSM and LGBTQ+ people.

Sexual Consent versus Sexual Pleasure

Recent publications (e.g., Fischel, 2019; Angel, 2021) have begun to call attention to the fact that the idea of "consent" has driven consent politics and consent discourses that conflate *agreement* for sex with *pleasure* and other emotions that are experienced before, during, and after sex. Equating agreement with pleasure is problematic because not all sex that is agreed to is enjoyable. Additionally, equating agreement with pleasure may encourage people to think that if they do not enjoy sex, then it was not consensual sex – which has implications on how people perceive their sexual experiences and how they conceptualize sexual assault (Fischel, 2019). Future research on MSM's sexual negotiations should tease apart sexual consent (i.e., agreement) and sexual pleasure, and explore how both of these ideas factor into and impact MSM's sexual experiences online and in person.

Sexual Exploitation of Racialized MSM

MSM dating app users experience sexual violence differently. Chapter 5 findings suggest that aspects of a person's identity, such as race or age, may affect the number of unsolicited DPs an MSM dating app user receives. Chapter 6 findings showed that racialized MSM are targets of racism, objectification, and fetishization in ways that white MSM are not. While troubling, these findings are not surprising. Many studies have shown that racialized MSM experience discrimination, racism, and violence on dating apps that white dating app users do not (e.g., Han, 2007; Raj, 2011; Riggs, 2013; Robinson, 2015, Callander, Newman, & Holt, 2015; Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2012, 2016). Research has also shown that racialized MSM are objectified (Teunis, 2007), fetishized (Han, 2007), and excluded or stereotyped (Callander, Holt, & Newman, 2012) because of their race. To my knowledge, research has not yet explored how white MSM may exploit racialized MSM through negotiations of consent on dating apps. Future research should investigate the ways in which white MSM sexually coerce and exploit racialized MSM through their use of dating apps.

Sexual Consent, Safety, and Violence

As I discussed in Chapter 7, MSM who intend to meet in person for a sexual encounter negotiate a variety of sexual and non-sexual parameters through their online interactions. These negotiations can promote safety, though they do not guarantee safety. Even if a person consents to a sexual activity, their partner(s) can still perpetrate sexual violence or other forms of violence. Thus, "safety" and "violence" are broader ideas that go beyond consent and sexual violence.

Few studies from Canada have investigated the different types of violence that LGBTQ+ dating app users experience (Ferris & Duguay, 2019). Research from Australia found that LGBTQ+ people have experienced emotional violence when using dating apps (Albury et al., 2019) and research from the U.S. found that LGBTQ+ people have experienced physical, sexual,

and emotional violence when dating (Dank et al., 2014; Whitton et al., 2019). Data from Statistics Canada indicate that the more than 1 million LGBTQ+ people living in Canada experience higher rates of physical, sexual, and emotional violence than heterosexual people (Jaffray, 2020). Future research should examine the online and in-person violence that MSM and LGBTQ+ people in Canada experience through their use of dating apps and should also explore the strategies that dating app users enact to promote their safety, health, and wellbeing.

Safety Mechanisms Users Want

Findings from this dissertation showed that MSM dating app users rely on in-app mechanisms, such as blocking and reporting, to address non-consensual and harassing behavior online. Some of my other research (e.g., Albury, Dietzel, et al., 2020; Albury et al., 2019) showed that dating app users employ their own strategies and approaches online and in person to promote their safety and mitigate non-consensual sexual behavior. Research could engage with MSM and LGBTQ+ dating app users to specifically examine their strategies and approaches and to explore their suggestions for improving dating apps.

Dating App Companies

As I explained above, Grindr, Tinder, and other dating app companies have shared information and resources related to safety and consent on their websites. Many dating apps offer in-app mechanisms for users to block and report people who harass, and they have community guidelines or pledges to detail the parameters of appropriate and inappropriate user conduct. Some dating app companies also have photo verification that aim to increase user safety. Together, this suggests that app companies recognize that their responsibility in promoting and protecting the health, safety, and wellbeing of their users.

Future studies should focus on dating app companies' role and their responsibility in addressing sexual violence facilitated through their platforms. It would be beneficial to specifically investigate the ways in which dating app companies are working to address TFSV and encourage safe and consensual interactions among their users.

Research on dating apps could also be conducted in partnership with dating app companies. Although I have had no success in my efforts to connect with Grindr or other MSM dating app companies, it would be beneficial to work collaboratively with them to explore ways to improve their services and products.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

In March 2020, following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in North America, governments in the U.S. and Canada instituted stay-at-home measures that forced people and businesses to adapt to physical distancing. Recent research showed that dating app companies encouraged their users to refrain from meeting in person and promoted public health measures (Myles, Duguay, & Dietzel, 2021). However, much less is known about how dating app users have adapted to the pandemic or COVID-related health and safety concerns. Future research should investigate how dating app users, including LGBTQ+ people, managed their health and safety during the pandemic, especially when meeting in person. Similarly, future research should also examine TFSV that users experienced during the pandemic.

Lastly, as I mentioned above, it is possible that MSM (and people in general) are more aware of consent frameworks because the pandemic has forced them to communicate and negotiate boundaries around personal safety when meeting in person. Using findings from this dissertation as a baseline, future research should explore if, and how, MSM dating app users' negotiations of consent have changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Notes for Future Researchers

In addition to offering suggestions for future research topics, I would like to offer suggestions for future researchers conducting similar studies similar. Specifically, I want to provide two notes: the first is about interview methods; the second is about the potential for experiencing sexual harassment when conducting research in this field.

Note about Interview Methods

I followed Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbott's (2015) approach for conducting interviews and gave participants the ability to choose whether they wanted to interview in person, by telephone, or by online chat. These options were offered to promote comfort, accessibility, and anonymity. Of the 25 MSM participants, three of them chose to interview by telephone and three chose to interview by online chat. While there were no issues with the telephone interviews, the online interviews created a challenge that I did not anticipate. I was prepared for potential lags in internet connection and I verified that participants had a reliable connection before beginning the interview. I also understood that online interviews would not yield as deep of conversations since typing is much slower than talking. However, in one online interview, there were moments when the participant took several minutes to respond to a question, giving me the impression that he was trying to multitask. The participant still answered my questions and I have no reason to believe that he gave false information. Rather, I cite this as a caution for researchers who consider conducting online interviews.

Of the 19 in-person interviews, I conducted three of them in cafés. This idea came from Ahlm's (2017) qualitative study on MSM dating app use. Ahlm (2017) suggested interviewing in a coffee shop to make the location more convenient for participants. (Incidentally, Ahlm also interviewed some of her participants via online communications, namely, via Skype and by

email.) I agree that meeting in a café was more convenient for participants, though the occasional loud noises from the café made it more difficult to transcribe the interviews. I had also hesitated about interviewing in cafés out of concern that participants might not share information in a public location that they would share in a private interview room. However, the café interviews provided rich data and there was no discernable difference in the quality of data collected from interviews conducted in cafés versus interviews conducted elsewhere. I mention this point not to discourage researchers from conducting interviews in cafés, but to encourage awareness of the benefits and challenges of different in-person interview methods.

Note about Sexual Harassment

I am a gay man. I did not discuss my sexuality with my MSM participants, but I think many of them (correctly) assumed that I also identify as a man who has sex with men. I mention this because I think these assumptions about my sexuality inadvertently yielded interesting data. Below, I highlight the actions of one non-participant and two participants and discuss what their behaviors imply for scholars conducting research in this field.

During participant recruitment, I received an email from someone named Richard who expressed interest in participating. I replied with detailed information about my study, including its purpose and the topic, and asked him if he preferred to interview in person, over the phone, or by online chat. He agreed to an in-person interview and I suggested meeting at McGill University. Instead, he said that he would be happy to conduct the interview in my bed, if I wanted. I firmly explained that this was a professional study, and that I would absolutely not conduct the interview in my bedroom. Richard never replied to that email.

There are two other cases that I want to highlight. At the end of one online interview, I asked the participant if he had anything else to share. He said, "I have nothing to add besides that you are an attractive guy hehe :)". I thanked him and then ended the interview.

Another participant, who I had interviewed in person, contacted me on an MSM dating app a few weeks after our interview. He reminded me who he was and told me that he found me cute. He also asked if I would be interested in meeting sometime for a date or "fun", which is a euphemism for sex in MSM dating app culture. I politely refused his offer.

I share these cases to highlight how MSM investigating MSM issues may experience sexual harassment or unwanted advances during their research. The fact that MSM blur the lines between professional or social communication and sexual communication is not surprising, as research has shown that LGBTQ+ people blur these lines in their personal relationships and friendships (Byron, 2020; Bryon, Albury & Pym, 2020; Byron et al., 2019). There is limited research on sexual harassment that researchers experience, though a guest editorial in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* by Dr. Debby Herbenick, Dr. Sari M. van Anders, and colleagues (2019) calls attention to this problem and urges for action. Research I conducted with Dr. Viviane Namaste and colleagues (2020) also discussed the challenges of researching sexual misconduct among MSM.

It is not within the scope of this dissertation to research or analyze sexual harassment that researchers experience when conducting their studies. However, I share my experiences – and cite recent articles that identified similar problems (Herbenick, van Anders, et al., 2019; Namaste et al., 2020) – to alert future researchers in the field and call attention to the issue.

Closing Thoughts

This dissertation found that MSM dating app users experience sexual violence through their use of dating apps. MSM may experience male sexual aggression, resumptions of consent,

and unsolicited dick pics while online. MSM may experience forced oral sex, sexual assault, and even rape when meeting another dating app user in person. Dating apps can facilitate additional violence and harm against racialized MSM and other MSM with intersectional, marginalized identities. MSM may experience dating apps as violent spaces.

However, dating apps can also facilitate safe and consensual connections. MSM can learn about themselves, explore their sexuality, and meet people they may have never met otherwise. MSM can find sex, intimacy, friendships, and romance through dating apps.

Dating apps are both a tool that people use to interact and a location where people interact. They are both a technology and a space. Dating apps reflect the norms and cultures of the people who use them. Dating apps can be made safe – or unsafe – by their users.

To address the sexual violence that MSM experience through their use of dating apps will require a collaborative and coordinated effort by individual dating app users, communities of MSM, and dating app companies. Educational institutions, community organizations, and governments should also get involved to address sexual violence. The recommendations I offered above outline tangible strategies and approaches that people can enact at the individual level, the community level, and the institutional level. Together, we can promote and foster safe, consensual, and enjoyable sexual relationships for everyone interacting online and in person.

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