An Intimacy Gap? Exploring U.S. Men's Experience with and Capacity for Physical Intimacy in their Same-Sex Friendships

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Abstract

Despite research linking touch to closeness and intimacy in interpersonal relationships, few studies have explored patterns and practices of touch in men's same-sex friendships. Given the benefits of close relationships for well-being, such research is essential in a context where adverse mental and physical health outcomes have risen among men. This study deployed a novel measure of physical intimacy in an online survey of 467 predominantly White (64.9%) ,18 - 65 year old (M = 30.*8*, SD = 10.6) men in the U.S. to capture men's subjective intimacy ratings of 62 discrete touch behaviors, assess men's experience with and capacity for physical intimacy in their same-sex friendships, and explore associations between attachment, masculinity, and physical intimacy outcomes. Results revealed significant gaps between the amount of platonic and sexualized physical intimacy men experience in their same-sex friendships and the amount they report being open to. The platonic intimacy gap was present for men from all four generational cohorts (i.e., Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers) – though results revealed differences in gap size by generation. The sexualized intimacy gap was smaller but consistent across all cohorts except Baby Boomers. Regression models found attachment, normative male alexithymia, homohysteria, masculinity contingency, and multiple demographic factors to be associated with our physical intimacy outcomes. Differences between platonic and sexualized physical intimacy are explored in this regard. Results are discussed in terms of intervention-ready behaviors and barriers and facilitators to touch in men's same-sex friendships.

Keywords: male friendship, touch, attachment, restrictive masculinity, masculinity contingency

Public Significance Statement

We found that men experience less physical intimacy in their friendships with other men than they are open to and that men's experience with and capacity for physical intimacy in their same-sex friendships is negatively correlated with several masculinity constructs. As close relationships are associated with positive health outcomes, closing this intimacy gap in men's same-sex friendships may help ameliorate recent, highly publicized increases in adverse psychosocial outcomes among American men – making research exploring the gap timely and socially relevant.

An Intimacy Gap? Exploring U.S. Men's Experience with and Capacity for Physical Intimacy in their Same-Sex Friendships

With 61% of American adults reporting that having close friends is extremely or very important for living a fulfilling life, the well-documented decline of friendship in America over recent decades is startling (Cox, 2021; Goddard, 2023), and men seem to be particularly impacted. From 1990 to 2021, the number of men reporting three or more close friends has declined by 20%, and the number of men reporting no close friends has grown from 3% to 15% - changes larger than those among women (Cox, 2021). This "friendship recession" is especially troubling for men as their friendships with other men tend to be of lesser quality than women's same-sex friendships (Demir & Orthel, 2011) and are often bereft of components of intimacy that even men themselves report being central to quality friendships (Fehr, 2004; Demir & Orthel, 2011; Movember, 2019). Exploring this intimacy deficit in men's friendships is urgent, given recent increases in loneliness, depression, anxiety, substance use, and "deaths of despair" among American men (Case & Deaton, 2017; Beseran et al., 2022; Yan et al., 2023). Helping men create close male friendships may ameliorate these negative trends, as strong social bonds are associated with positive mental and physical health outcomes (Holt-Lundstad et al., 2010; Demir & Orthel, 2011; Marver et al., 2017; Alsarrani et al., 2022; Camirand & Poulin, 2022; Tunçgenç et al., 2023). Strengthening men's threadbare friendship networks and unlocking these benefits requires identifying relevant mechanisms for increasing intimacy in men's same-sex friendships.

Touch Builds Social Bonds

Touch is one mechanism that remains underexplored in this context despite research directly linking touch to a wide variety of positive mental, physical, and relational outcomes (see

Jakubiak & Feeney, 2017 for a review). Touch is also a direct means of intimate disclosure, the sharing of our innermost thoughts and feelings that is foundational to developing and maintaining interpersonal closeness (Reis & Shaver, 1988; Collins & Miller, 1994; Hertenstein et al., 2006, 2009). Further, touch facilitates intimate verbal disclosure (Rabinowitz, 1991), suggesting both direct and indirect links between touch and the generation of interpersonal closeness.

While touch appears to be a viable and proven pathway to interpersonal closeness, gender differences present barriers to generating intimacy between male friends via touch (Derlega et al., 1989; Russo et al., 2020). More specifically, compared to women, men are less comfortable with touch (Webb & Peck, 2014), respond more negatively to touch (Russo et al., 2020), and are less likely to initiate same-sex touch (Stier & Hall, 1984; Derlega et al., 1989). Further, men seem more adept at communicating anger via touch than prosocial emotions like happiness and sympathy (Hertenstein & Keltner, 2011), potentially limiting its utility as a means of intimate disclosure. Deconstructing these barriers requires examining psychosocial forces underpinning gendered differences in experience and comfort with touch. This study explores attachment and masculinities as such forces.

Adult Attachment Shapes Touch Motives, Desires, and Practices

Attachment theory posits that early caregiver interactions shape internal working models of self, others, and relationships that guide relational behaviors into adulthood (Bowlby, 1973). Adult attachment is best conceptualized as individual differences along two distinct attachment dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (see Fraley et al., 2015, for a brief history of this dimensional understanding of attachment). Attachment anxiety is characterized by a desire for intimacy and closeness combined with anxiety regarding abandonment and fear of

unlovability. In contrast, attachment avoidance manifests in an inclination toward independence and self-reliance stemming from discomfort with vulnerability and distrust of others (Simpson & Rholes, 1998).

While most men are secure in their attachments (i.e., possess low levels of anxiety and avoidance) and develop close, intimate relationships with others, men are more likely to present with attachment avoidance than attachment anxiety (Bowlby, 1969; Mickelson et al., 1997; Del Giudice, 2009; Gray & Dunlop, 2019). This has implications for touch as the physical and emotional closeness touch requires and generates conflict with the discomfort with vulnerability and distrust of others characteristic of attachment avoidance – positioning attachment avoidance as a barrier to physical intimacy between male friends. Research linking attachment avoidance to a reduced likelihood of seeking or initiating touch, increased discomfort with touch, less desire for touch, and more negative feelings regarding touch supports this understanding (Simpson et al., 1992; Chopik et al., 2014; Carmichael et al., 2021; Jakubiak et al., 2021b).

Attachment anxiety's relationship to touch is less clear. Theoretically, the desire for proximity and reassurance characterizing attachment anxiety should facilitate physical intimacy, as touch establishes proximity and provides reassurance (Jakubiak & Feeney, 2016; Shaver et al., 2005) – a proposition supported by positive correlations between attachment anxiety and touch desire, touch approach motives, and benefits of received touch (Carmichael et al., 2021; Jakubiak et al., 2021a, 2021b). On the other hand, attachment anxiety also entails fears of abandonment and unlovability that may stymie affectionate touch in male friendships, as many men may retreat from such intimacy out of fear of rejection. These fears may be exacerbated by masculine norms disincentivizing intimacy between men (Mahalik et al., 2003). The ambivalence inherent in these dueling impulses may explain the null or mixed results seen in research exploring

attachment anxiety and touch (Simpson et al., 1992; Fraley & Shaver, 1998; Chopik et al., 2014; Jakubiak et al., 2021b).

Despite work demonstrating the relevance of adult attachment to platonic relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Fraley & Davis, 1997; Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Welch & Houser, 2010; Chow & Tan, 2013; Chow et al., 2016), most research exploring attachment and touch centers romantic relationships. Correlations between general, romantic, and platonic attachment models suggest that the existing literature can inform our understanding of how the attachment-touch relationship may play out in friendships (Fraley et al., 2011). However, additional research is needed to specify the degree to which the specific relationships between attachment and touch detailed above apply to friendships – a call answered by this work. Echoing existing literature, we expect attachment avoidance will be negatively correlated with men's comfort and experience with physical intimacy in their same-sex friendships, while attachment anxiety will be positively associated with these outcomes.

Masculinity Ideologies Can Impede Physical Intimacy

Masculinity ideologies are sets of socially constructed (and thus culturally, temporally, and situationally bound) beliefs, norms, and expectations about how men should think, feel, and behave (Pleck, 1995; Levant & Richmond, 2016). These superordinate ideologies shape social interactions from the macro level (e.g., media, institutions, and groups) to the micro level (e.g., interpersonal interactions and intrapsychic evaluations), socializing boys to adopt, reproduce, and enforce said ideologies (Pleck, 1995; Levant & Richmond, 2016; Wong & Wang, 2022). While many men deviate from these ideologies or adhere to them to varying degrees, their influence is so pervasive that both conformity and deviance are incredibly consequential (Pleck, 1995). In that vein, while the emphasis on social construction rightly suggests that there is no

singular masculinity ideology, Pleck (1995, p. 20) acknowledges a "particular constellation of standards and expectations" that exist across the array of masculinity ideologies within contemporary U.S. culture that are associated with adverse outcomes for men. Included in this constellation are restrictive norms regarding emotional control and homophobia that are particularly detrimental to the expression of intimacy within men's friendships with other men (Pleck, 1995; Levant & Richmond, 2016).

Normative Male Alexithymia: The Internalization of Emotional Control

It has been theorized that the socialization of boys into the norms and expectations regarding the suppression and subjugation of emotions can lead to sub-clinical deficits in identifying, describing, and expressing emotions observed among some men – an affliction known as normative male alexithymia (Levant, 1992; Levant et al., 2009). Affected men struggle to find the words to communicate their emotions, lack an identifiable bodily response to their emotional states, and rely on cognition to deduce emotional responses (Levant et al., 2006). Notably, normative male alexithymia seems to be limited to emotions that are out of step with masculine gender norms and expectations, such as feelings of vulnerability (e.g., hurt, fear) or attachment (e.g., affection, loneliness) (Levant et al., 2006; 2014). While we found no research directly exploring the relationship between normative male alexithymia and touch, taking touch seriously as a means of intimate disclosure (i.e., the communication of one's feelings) makes it clear how these deficits may hamper touch's ability to generate intimacy between male friends.

First, men experiencing normative male alexithymia should struggle to communicate emotions like affection and empathy via touch as opposed to more gender-normative emotions like anger or lust (Hertenstein & Keltner, 2011). Second, the generation of interpersonal closeness via intimate disclosure occurs through a dynamic process whereby each party discloses

vulnerable information (e.g., personal thoughts and feelings) and responds with understanding and care (Reiss & Shaver, 1988; Laurenceau et al., 1998). To the extent that normative male alexithymia prevents affected men from understanding and communicating vulnerable emotions, this intimacy process is short-circuited. Research linking normative male alexithymia to broader interpersonal difficulties (Liaqat et al., 2020) and poor communication and fear of intimacy in romantic relationships (Karakis & Levant, 2012) underscore this communication breakdown. Further, these difficulties should be compounded when both parties are men suffering from similar deficits – which may contribute to the increased discord in men's same-sex friendships (Guvensel et al., 2018). These findings have implications for touch, given its communicative functions. We, therefore, expect normative male alexithymia to be negatively correlated with men's experience with and capacity for physical intimacy in their male friendships.

Homophobia: The Creation and Consequences of Homohysteria

Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory details the inverse relationship between homophobia and physical intimacy in men's same-sex friendships. The theory posits that homohysteria, the fear of being perceived as gay and the self-policing of behavior to avoid such perceptions, is a function of cultural homophobia (Anderson, 2009; Anderson & McCormack, 2016). To the extent that homohysteria generates hypervigilance among some men regarding their heterosexual self-presentation, those men are likely to experience discomfort with – and therefore avoid – engaging in physical affection with their male friends, given how such expressions are often interpreted as a sign of non-heterosexual identity (Derlega et al., 1989).

As cultural homophobia declines in society, the desire to avoid being perceived as gay (i.e., homohysteria) also recedes, making way for men to express themselves in counter-stereotypical ways – including touching their male friends – with less fear of retribution or other

negative social consequences (Anderson, 2009; Anderson & McCormack, 2016). Anderson and colleagues have documented how modern reductions in societal homophobia have increased young (and predominantly white) men's comfort with homosocial affection in the U.K., leading them to engage in more intimate, tactile platonic friendships that include kissing, cuddling, spooning, and overt declarations of love and affection (Anderson et al., 2012; Anderson & McCormack, 2014; Robinson et al., 2017). Although overall acceptance is higher in the U.K., we have seen relatively more rapid declines in societal homophobia in the U.S. (Poushter & Kent, 2020). Consequently, American men should also experience more freedom to engage in the physically intimate behaviors research has found among young men in the U.K. (Adams, 2011). Reflecting this mechanism, we expect homohysteria to be negatively correlated with men's experience with and capacity for physical intimacy in their male friendships.

Precarious Manhood Raises Stakes of Physical Intimacy Between Men

The theory of precarious manhood highlights how the structure of masculinities may impede physical touch in men's same-sex friendships. Noting that masculine identity is structured as an achievement so elusive and tenuous that "a single feminine or unmanly act can temporarily reverse a man's gender status regardless of how many times he has proven it" (Vandello & Bossom, 2013, p. 3), the theory effectively positions physical intimacy between male friends as a threat to men's gender identity, given research finding such behaviors are likely to be construed as feminine or a sign of non-heterosexual identity (Derlega et al., 1989; Way, 2011; 2013). Moreover, by claiming that this precarity compels many men to continuously publicly reassert their manhood by projecting a stereotypically masculine performance, the theory implies physical touch between men isn't just a threat to be managed but one to be actively avoided (Vandello et al., 2008; Vandello & Bosson, 2013).

Masculinity Contingency

Conceptualized as capturing individual differences in the degree to which men perceive their manhood as precarious, masculinity contingency (MC) is a bi-dimensional construct that assesses how much a man's self-worth is harmed by an insufficient performance of masculinity (i.e., MC-Threat) and how much his self-worth is enhanced by the successful performance of masculinity (i.e., MC-Boost) (Burkley et al., 2015). In the language of the theory of precarious manhood, MC-Threat is best understood as the degree to which a man feels his masculinity is susceptible to threat, while MC-Boost represents the degree to which a man is invested in its public reification. Though no research has explored the relationship between MC and touch in men's same-sex friendships, MC-Threat intuitively should inhibit behaviors that threaten masculine status – including touch between male friends. MC-Boost's relationship to physical intimacy in men's friendships is a bit less clear.

On one hand, a successful performance of masculinity could come in the form of participating in popular institutions of male bonding (e.g., sports, fraternities), which, given how touch is formally and informally interwoven into many of these spaces, could facilitate certain touch between men and reduce perceptions of these behaviors as unmasculine. On the other hand, publicly affirming one's masculine identity could also look like actively avoiding affectionate touch with other men or engaging in less intimate touch behaviors (i.e., greeting a friend with a fist bump instead of a hug). We favor the latter interpretation, as both MC-Boost and MC-Threat are positively correlated with homophobia (Burkley et al., 2015). Therefore, we predict both variables will have an inverse relationship to physical intimacy in men's same-sex friendships.

The Current Study

This study uses a novel measure of physical intimacy, the Male Intimate Touch Checklist (MITCH-62), to quantify men's experience with and capacity for physical intimacy in their male friendships and explore the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a physical intimacy gap in men's same-sex friendships?

RQ2: How do attachment and the content and structure of masculinities relate to men's experience with and capacity for touch in their same-sex friendships?

Method

Participants

A total of 523 adult men in the U.S. were recruited from November 24-25, 2020, via Prolific, an online research platform. After removing men who declined informed consent (n = 2), did not complete all items (n = 20), and did not identify as cisgender (n = 12), we were left with 489 men. To further ensure data quality, we removed participants with response times indicating insufficient effort (n = 17), using Huang et al.'s (2012) threshold of 2 seconds per item. Lastly, we removed participants who provided identical (n = 3), plagiarized (n = 1), and incoherent (n = 2) responses to qualitative survey items not reported herein. Our final sample included 467 men.

Participants were 18 to 65 years old (M= *30.8*, SD = 10.6) and belonged to four generational cohorts: Gen Z (age 18-23, 30.4%), Millennial (age 24-39, 50.3%), Gen X (age 40-55, 15.2%), and Baby Boomer (age 56-65, 4.1%). The ethnic and racial breakdown of our sample from most to least represented was: 64.9% White, 13.9% Asian, 7.9% Hispanic or Latin American, 7.5% Black or African American, 4.1% Mixed-Race / Multiracial, 0.9% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.6% Other, and 0.2% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Socioeconomically, our sample was relatively well-educated, with 48.2% of the men reporting at least a 4-year degree and an additional 36.4% reporting at least some post-secondary education. The median income of our sample was between $30,000 and $39,999, with 76.9% of men reporting being either employed or in school at the time of survey completion. See *Table 1* for sample demographics.

Procedure

Participants completed a 20-minute Qualtrics survey distributed via Prolific and were paid $3.20 for their time (i.e., $9.60 per hour). The Brooklyn College institutional review board approved this study.

Measures

Physical Intimacy

We developed and deployed the Male Intimate Touch Checklist (MITCH-62) to quantify men's *experienced intimacy* (i.e., amount of physical intimacy men report experiencing) and *intimacy capacity* (i.e., amount of physical intimacy men report being open to). The MITCH-62 consists of three rounds of questions referencing a list of 62 touch behaviors, with clarifying descriptions where necessary (e.g., Gaddafi [i.e., to poke another person in the butt with fingers or a pointy object]). To create the measure, the lead author generated a list of touch behaviors and then circulated that list among a small group of men identified via snowball sampling to solicit additions and clarifications. When no new additional behaviors were added, snowball sampling was terminated ($N = 7$). The lead author polished the list and collapsed certain behaviors into descriptive categories to reduce participant burden without sacrificing content. To ensure comprehensiveness, the MITCH-62 allowed participants to list additional touch behaviors they have or would be open to engaging in with their male friends. Seven participants reported a

total of 11 additional behaviors – most were either already included in the MITCH-62 or could reasonably be categorized as such (e.g., “butt slap,” “nipple twisting”). The remaining participant-generated behaviors (e.g., “bean dip/ice cream scoop,” “hair cut (head) as well as getting waxed/shaved by another man (ass, cock, balls)”) were noted for consideration in future iterations.

Round 1 asked participants to indicate which behaviors on the list they had engaged in with their male friends. Round 2 presented the list again, minus behaviors they indicated having engaged in, and asked which of the remaining behaviors they would be open to engaging in if the opportunity presented itself. Round 3 presented the complete list and asked participants to rate the intimacy of each behavior using a 5-point Likert scale.

We calculated a mean intimacy rating (IR) for each of the 62 behaviors by averaging the per-behavior IRs across all participants. Given the subjective nature of intimacy (i.e., what may be highly intimate touch to one person may be more casual, less intimate touch to another person), we calculate each participant’s experienced intimacy and intimacy capacity using their individual IRs for each behavior. Therefore, we calculated experienced intimacy by summing each participant’s own IRs for all behaviors they indicated having experienced in Round 1. We then calculated intimacy capacity by summing IRs for all behaviors the participant selected in Rounds 1 and 2.

Inclusion of Sexual Behaviors. The MITCH-62 includes sexual behaviors for three reasons: (1) the men who generated the behavior list (and survey respondents) added sexual behaviors, so including them is consonant with men’s conceptualization of the possibilities within male friendship; (2) the MITCH-62 is inclusive of sexual minority men, who do not always segregate sex and friendship (Wilkinson et al., 2012; Davis & Mehta, 2022), and (3) even

some heterosexual-identifying men engage in sexual or sexualized behaviors with male friends (Ward, 2015; Silva, 2021). However, these experiences are relatively rare, and there is a normative difference between sexualized and platonic affectionate behavior (Birnie-Porter & Lydon, 2013) – a difference with potential implications for our findings. To explore this distinction, we split the MITCH-62 behaviors into two categories and calculated experienced intimacy and intimacy capacity for each: (1) *sexualized behaviors*, encompassing behaviors that are explicitly sexual or involve nudity, and (2) *platonic behaviors*, encompassing all other behaviors. See *Table 2* for a complete list of touch behaviors by category with mean IR.

Demographics

We assessed age, race, educational attainment, employment, and income. As the distribution of some variables prevented more complex comparative analyses, the following variables were recoded into binary variables: (1) Race was recoded into 1—*White* and 0—*Non-White;* (2) Educational Attainment was recoded into 1—*Degree* (a 4-year degree or higher) and 0–*No Degree*; and (3) Employment was recoded into 1—*Employed* (full- or part-time employment and students) and 0—*Unemployed*.

Sexual Attraction and Homosocial Preference

Two Likert items, adapted from the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (Klein et al., 1985), asked participants to indicate their same-sex sexual attraction (i.e., "To whom are you sexually attracted?") and homosocial preference (i.e., "With whom do you generally socialize?") using the following response options: 1–*Women Exclusively*; 2–*Women Mostly*; 3–*Men & Women Equally*; 4–*Men Mostly*; and 5–*Men Exclusively*. Our sample displayed relatively low levels of same-sex sexual attraction ($M = 1.46$, $SD = 1.03$) and were equally partial to men and women socially ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.65$).

Adult Attachment

We measured attachment avoidance and anxiety via the Relationship Structures Questionnaire – General Attachment (RSQ-GA; Fraley, 2014). Participants indicated agreement with six statements tapping avoidance (e.g., "I don't feel comfortable opening up to others.") and three items tapping anxiety (e.g., "I'm afraid that other people may abandon me.") using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1–*Strongly Disagree* to 6–*Strongly Agree*. We averaged participant responses to calculate attachment anxiety (α = .868) and avoidance (α = .854) scores.

Masculinity

Homohysteria. Participants completed the three-item Heterosexual Self-Presentation subscale of the 30-item Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI-30) (e.g., "I would be furious if someone thought I was gay.") using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1–*Strongly Disagree* to 6–*Strongly Agree* (Levant et al., 2020). We averaged participant responses to compute homohysteria scores (α = .937).

Normative Male Alexithymia. Participants completed the six-item brief Normative Male Alexithymia Scale (NMAS-BF) (e.g., "I have difficulty telling others that I care about them.") using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1–*Strongly Disagree* to 7–*Strongly Agree* (Levant & Parent, 2019). We averaged participant responses to calculate normative male alexithymia scores (α = .825).

Masculinity Contingency (MC). We measured MC via the Masculinity Contingency Scale (MCS), which asks participants to indicate agreement with five items tapping MC-Boost (e.g., "My self-esteem gets a boost if I feel macho") and five items tapping MC-Threat (e.g., "My self-worth suffers if I think my manhood is lacking") using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1–*Strongly Disagree* to 6–*Strongly Agree* (Burkley et al., 2015). We calculated MC-Boost

(α = .908) and MC-Threat (α = .929) subscale scores by averaging participant responses to corresponding items.

Data Analysis Strategy

RQ1: Is there a physical intimacy gap in men's same-sex friendships?

Two paired samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether men's capacity for physical intimacy in their male friendships significantly exceeds their experience of such intimacy – one for platonic intimacy and one for sexualized intimacy. We conducted two mixed ANOVAs, with the relevant experience and capacity variables as within-subjects factors and generational cohort as the between-subjects factor, to determine whether the physical intimacy gap (i.e., the discrepancy between men's capacity and experience for physical intimacy) is consistent across generational cohorts.

RQ2: How do attachment and the content and structure of masculinities relate to men's experience with and capacity for touch in their same-sex friendships?

We estimated 2-step hierarchical linear regression models for each of the following dependent variables: experienced platonic intimacy, experienced sexualized intimacy, platonic intimacy capacity, and sexualized intimacy capacity. The first step of all models included demographics (i.e., age, race, education, employment, income), same-sex sexual attraction, and homosocial preference. The second step introduced attachment (i.e., avoidance, anxiety) and masculinity (i.e., homohysteria, normative male alexithymia, MC-Boost, and MC-Threat).

To investigate the relationship between these variables and the gap between men's experience and capacity for platonic and sexualized physical intimacy in their male friendships, we ran two three-step hierarchical linear regression models – one for platonic intimacy capacity and one for sexualized intimacy capacity. The first step of each contained the corresponding

experienced intimacy variable. The second step introduced demographics, same-sex sexual attraction, and homosocial preference. The third step added attachment and masculinity. See *Table 3* for correlations between regression variables.

Results

MITCH-62 Behavior Data

A review of MITCH-62 IRs ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.68$) revealed the close two-armed hug to be the most intimate touch behavior, with an average IR of 4.11 ($SD = 0.91$) that surprisingly exceeded the average IRs of all measured sexualized behaviors. Excluding those sexualized behaviors, which fewer than 6% of our sample reported experiencing and less than 11% of our sample expressed a capacity for, clothed cuddling ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.43$), a peck on the mouth ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.44$), clothed spooning ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.41$), and a close one-armed hug ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.90$) round out the top five most intimate behaviors by average IR. The most endorsed touch behavior was the handshake, with 92.9% of men reporting having experienced a handshake in the previous five years. Among the top five most frequently experienced behaviors —handshake, fist bump (88.7%), high-five (80.9%), pat on the back (62.7%), and close one-armed hug (61.5%)— it is noteworthy that only the close one-armed hug was above average in terms of perceived intimacy and that less than two-thirds of the sample endorsed it.

The close two-armed hug (-37%), first-aid (-36%), chest bump (-34.4%), the distant one-armed hug (-30.4%), and arm wrestling (-29.3%) stand out as the behaviors where there is the largest discrepancy between the percentage of men who report openness to behavior and the percentage of men who have engaged in that behavior in the previous five years. That the close two-armed hug is perceived as the most intimate behavior while also having the largest experience-capacity gap is particularly remarkable. See *Table 2* for all MITCH-62 behavior data.

RQ1: Physical Intimacy Gap

Results of our paired samples t-tests revealed the capacity for platonic intimacy among men in our sample (M = 54.61, SD = 37.12) to exceed their experienced platonic intimacy (M = 32.49, SD = 26.19), $t_{(466)}$ = -21.24, $p < .001$, d = 1.2, supporting H_1, A statistically significant, though much smaller, gap was also found between men's capacity for (M = 5.07, SD = 15.41) and experience with (M = 2.08, SD = 8.47) sexualized intimacy in their male friendships, $t_{(466)}$ = -5.78, $p < .001$, d = 0.27.

A mixed ANOVA testing for generational differences in the platonic intimacy gap produced a significant interaction (F (3,463) = 2.81, p = .039, η^2 = .018), indicating the size of the gap between experienced platonic intimacy and platonic intimacy capacity differed across generational cohorts. Simple effects revealed that the gap was significant for all four groups (using Bonferroni adjusted p-values to account for the four individual tests): Gen Z (MD = 20.16, SE = 1.33, $p < .001$, η^2 = .330), Millennials (MD = 19.99, SE = 1.04, $p < .001$, η^2 = .445), Gen X (MD = 16.48, SE = 1.89, $p < .001$, η^2 = .142), and Baby Boomers (MD = 10.84, SE = 3.65, $p < .001$, η^2 = .019). However, the platonic intimacy gap for Baby Boomers was smaller than that of Gen Z and Millennials but not significantly different from Gen X. The platonic intimacy gap for Gen X was also relatively smaller than that of Gen Z but was not different from any other generational cohort.

For sexualized intimacy, generational cohort did not interact with the experience–capacity gap, suggesting that the difference between experienced sexualized intimacy and sexualized intimacy capacity did not significantly differ by generational cohort (F (3,463) = 0.20, p = .900, η^2 = .001)). Simple effects revealed that the gap was significant for all groups except Baby Boomers (using Bonferroni adjusted p-values to account for the four individual

tests): Gen Z (*MD* = 2.60, *SE* = 0.94, *p* = .006, η^2 = .016), Millennials (*MD* = 3.06, *SE* = 0.73, *p* < .001, η^2 = .036), Gen X (*MD* = 3.73, *SE* = 1.33, *p* = .005, η^2 = .017), but not for Baby Boomers (*MD* = 2.21, *SE* = 2.57, *p* = .390, η^2 = .02).

RQ2: Attachment, Masculinity, and Physical Intimacy

Experienced Intimacy

Demographics, same-sex sexual attraction, and homosocial preference accounted for 9.9% of the variance in men's experienced platonic intimacy ($F_{(7, 459)}$ = 8.35, *p* < .001), with age (β = -0.22) and same-sex sexual attraction (β = 0.22) being significant predictors. The introduction of adult attachment and masculinity variables in the second step of the model accounted for 7.8% of additional variance in experienced platonic intimacy ($F_{(6,453)}$ = 8.22, *p* < .001), with employment (β = 0.11), attachment anxiety (β = 0.17), homohysteria (β = -0.13), normative male alexithymia (β = -0.17), and MC-Boost (β = 0.20) emerging as significant predictors.

Regarding experienced sexualized intimacy, demographics, same-sex sexual attraction, and homosocial preference accounted for 26.5% of the variance in men's experienced sexualized intimacy ($F_{(7,459)}$ = 25.00, *p* < .001), with same-sex sexual attraction (β = 0.51) emerging as a significant predictor of men's experienced sexualized intimacy. The addition of adult attachment and masculinity variables in the second step of the model accounted for a non-significant 0.8% of additional variance ($F_{(6,453)}$ = 1.89, *p* = .081), with no attachment or masculinity variables emerging as significant predictors of experienced sexualized intimacy. See *Table 4* for the complete results of both experienced intimacy models

Intimacy Capacity

Demographics, same-sex sexual attraction, and homosocial preference accounted for 12.2% of the variance in men's platonic intimacy capacity ($F_{(7,459)} = 10.24$, $p < .001$), with age (β = -0.24), white racial identity (β = 0.10), and same-sex sexual attraction (β = 0.25) emerging as significant predictors. The introduction of adult attachment and masculinity variables in the second step of the model accounted for 10.0% of additional variance ($F_{(6,453)} = 10.87$, $p < .001$), with White racial identity losing its significance and employment (β = 0.10), attachment anxiety (β = 0.17), homohysteria (β = -0.19), normative male alexithymia (β = -0.12), MC-Threat (β = -0.15), and MC-Boost (β = 0.20), emerging as significant predictors.

Regarding sexualized intimacy capacity, demographics, same-sex sexual attraction, and homosocial preference accounted for 31.6% of the variance in men's sexualized intimacy capacity ($F_{(7,459)} = 30.26$, $p < .001$), with same-sex sexual attraction (β = 0.55) emerging as a significant predictor of men's sexualized intimacy capacity. The addition of adult attachment and masculinity variables in the second step of the model accounted for a non-significant 0.6% of additional variance ($F_{(6,453)} = 1.66$, $p = .129$), with no attachment or masculinity variables emerging as significant predictors of men's sexualized intimacy capacity. See *Table 5* for the complete results of both intimacy capacity models

Intimacy Gap

In our platonic intimacy gap model, experienced platonic intimacy accounted for 69.9% of the variance in men's platonic intimacy capacity ($F_{(1,465)} = 1081.69$, $p < .001$). Introducing demographics, same-sex sexual attraction, and homosocial preference in the second step of the model accounted for 0.8% of additional variance ($F_{(7,458)} = 2.88$, $p = .006$), with age (β = -0.06), White racial identity (β = 0.06), and same-sex sexual attraction (β = 0.07) emerging as significant predictors of the gap between men's experience and capacity for platonic physical

intimacy in their same-sex friendships. Incorporating adult attachment and masculinity variables in the third step of the model accounted for 1.3% of additional variance ($F_{(6,452)} = 4.67$, $p < .001$), with age, white racial identity, and same-sex sexual attraction losing their significance and homohysteria ($\beta = -0.09$) emerging as a significant predictor of the platonic intimacy gap.

In our sexualized intimacy gap model, experienced sexualized intimacy accounted for 49.9% of the variance in men's sexualized intimacy capacity ($F_{(1,465)} = 464.75$, $p < .001$). Introducing demographics, same-sex sexual attraction, and homosocial preference in the second step of the model accounted for 4.5% of additional variance ($F_{(7,458)} = 7.51$, $p < .001$), with same-sex sexual attraction ($\beta = 0.26$) emerging as a significant predictor of the gap between men's experience and capacity for sexualized physical intimacy in their same-sex friendships. Incorporating adult attachment and masculinity variables in the third step of the model accounted for no additional variance ($F_{(6,452)} = 0.94$, $p = .469$), with no attachment or masculinity variables emerging as significant predictors of the sexualized intimacy gap. See *Table 6* for the complete results of both intimacy gap models.

Discussion

This study used a novel measure of physical intimacy to quantify men's experience with and capacity for physical intimacy in their friendships with other men and explore two questions: (1) is there a physical intimacy gap in men's same-sex friendships? and (2) how do attachment and the content and structure of masculinities relate to men's experience with and capacity for touch in their same-sex friendships? Our results shed light on both questions.

A Physical Intimacy Gap?

Our findings show that men experience a significantly restricted range of physically intimate touch behaviors in their friendships with other men relative to what they are open to

engaging in, evidencing a potential intimacy gap. This gap was consistent across behavior types, though the effect size for the sexualized intimacy gap was much smaller. These findings suggest there is room to leverage touch as a mechanism for deepening men's same-sex friendships – particularly as it relates to platonic physical intimacy. Men's experience and capacity for sexualized intimacy in their male friendships was largely a function of sexual attraction and is thus a less viable target for intervention. However, results related to age and generational cohorts offer an important caveat. Baby Boomers, in particular, had a much smaller platonic intimacy gap than the two youngest generational cohorts. While the small number of Baby Boomers in our sample (n = 19) means these comparative results should be read with caution, the findings are bolstered by the fact that increased age was associated with decreased experience and capacity for platonic physical intimacy. These results suggest that interventions to improve men's same-sex friendships by increasing platonic physical intimacy may be most effective with, or at least more readily received by younger populations.

Theoretically, our findings provide some support for Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory, as age-related changes in physical intimacy experience and capacity in men's friendships match patterns of generational acceptance of sexual minorities (Parker et al., 2019; Poushter & Kent, 2020). Interestingly, though, we did not see the same levels of engagement with behaviors like kissing reported among the (young, predominantly white) U.K. men in some of Anderson's studies (e.g., Anderson et al., 2012) – which could be a function of overall levels of sexual minority acceptance being higher in the U.K. than in the U.S. (Poushter & Kent, 2020). Nonetheless, these findings suggest the need for more research exploring inclusive masculinity among men in the U.S.

Attachment and Physical Intimacy in Men's Same-Sex Friendships

As hypothesized, attachment anxiety was positively associated with experienced intimacy and intimacy capacity. These findings echo theoretical and empirical work linking attachment anxiety to proximity seeking, increased desire for touch, and increased approach motives regarding touch (Jakubiak & Feeney, 2016; Carmichael et al., 2021; Jakubiak et al., 2021a). That attachment anxiety was still associated with increased experience with and capacity for physical intimacy in men's same-sex friendships when controlling for our measured masculinity constructs suggests that these elements of masculinity ideologies and the precarious structure of masculinities may not impede anxiously attached men from seeking reassurance and security from their male friends via touch.

While attachment avoidance was negatively correlated with men's experience with and capacity for overall and platonic intimacy at the bivariate level – in line with past research (Simpson et al., 1992; Chopik et al., 2014; Carmichael et al., 2021) – it did not emerge as a significant predictor in the presence of masculinity variables in our model. It could be argued that in the context of touch in men's same-sex friendships, the behavioral manifestations of certain tenets of masculinity (e.g., inhibited emotional expression, fear of being perceived as gay, discomfort with affection between men) are remarkably similar to, and may be more proximal indicators of, attachment avoidance – an interpretation supported by a robust bivariate correlation between attachment avoidance and normative male alexithymia. It could also be the case that normative male alexithymia (and perhaps other masculinity constructs) mediates the relationship between masculine socialization processes and attachment avoidance in adulthood. In other words, disproportionate attachment avoidance in men may be the result of difficulties communicating vulnerable emotions, self-reliance, competitiveness, and other normative expectations we place on boys from a young age. Our findings suggest a need for more research

at the intersection of masculinity and adult attachment – which has the potential to clarify some theoretically inconsistent findings among men (Simpson et al., 1992; Fraley & Shaver, 1998)

Masculinities and Physical Intimacy in Men's Same-Sex Friendships

Our models explored the impact of three masculinity constructs on our intimacy outcomes: (1) homohysteria, (2) normative male alexithymia, and (3) MC. Homohysteria was negatively associated with intimacy capacity. These results are consistent with the body of research linking a fear of being perceived as gay with adverse physical intimacy outcomes in men's friendships and emphasize the significant downstream benefits – to all men – of efforts to decrease societal homophobia (McCormack & Anderson, 2014). As predicted, normative male alexithymia was also negatively associated with both of our physical intimacy outcomes. These findings suggest that normative male alexithymia may hamper men's verbal *and* physical communication – and highlight the need for more work exploring touch as a medium of communication between men, and what it would mean to incorporate masculinity into theories of intimacy.

Contrary to our hypotheses, MC-Boost was associated with increased experience with and capacity for platonic physical intimacy in men's friendships with other men. As MC-Boost refers to the degree to which the successful performance of masculinity enhances one's self-worth, these findings suggest that a successful masculine performance can include physical intimacy between male friends. Work by Anderson and colleagues (Anderson et al., 2012; Anderson & McCormack, 2014; Robinson et al., 2017) speaks to these possibilities, as does the prevalence of touch in stereotypically hypermasculine spaces like sports and fraternities (Ward, 2015). That MC-Threat was only associated with reduced platonic intimacy capacity is surprising. One interpretation is that experienced intimacy may be less impacted by MC-Threat

given the dyadic nature of experienced touch – implicating factors beyond individual-level conceptions of masculinity and touch behavior preferences. These results beg for additional research into how men perceive and experience touch individually and how those perceptions and experiences interact dyadically in their male friendships.

Strengths and Contributions

A core strength of this work is our novel approach to measuring physical intimacy, which utilizes a comprehensive list of touch behaviors generated by content experts (i.e., men) paired with individualized subjective ratings of each behavior to capture men's experience with and capacity for physical intimacy in their male friendships. This study is also among the first to quantitatively explore physical intimacy in men's same-sex friendships in the U.S. and to explore normative male alexithymia and MC in this context. Our attachment findings, which break from the extant pattern of null results when exploring the impact of attachment anxiety on interpersonal touch (Simpson et al., 1992; Fraley & Shaver, 1998; Chopik et al., 2014), also offer important insight. Our findings suggest these null results, commonly interpreted as reflecting attachment anxiety's ambivalence, may have alternative explanations. Perhaps this discrepancy is attributable to measurement differences, where our focus on the intimacy of touch may be more pertinent to the drive for reassurance and security that characterize attachment anxiety than the frequency of touch (the primary measure used in prior research on this topic). Alternatively, attachment anxiety's ambivalence may be less prominent in the friendship context relative to the predominantly explored romantic context, where the stakes and fear of rejection may be less intense. These are essential questions raised by our findings that, if explored, will enrich the attachment and touch literatures – as would more research exploring the potentially reflexive relationship between masculinity and attachment avoidance.

Constraints on Generality

Research conducted via online recruitment platforms (e.g., Prolific) is increasingly common. However, these participants are likely to differ from the general population in their awareness of, interest in, and experience with participating in scientific research. Their access to internet-connected devices may also separate them from various sub-populations (e.g., rural and tribal communities). Consequently, our Prolific sample represents a potential constraint on the generality of our findings. Further, our intentional focus on American men geographically and culturally constrains the generality of our findings to men in the United States. The COVID-19 pandemic also represents a noteworthy historical and contextual constraint on generality, as it shaped prevailing norms and public policy in ways that fundamentally altered patterns and practices of touch for people worldwide. While we assessed touch over a time horizon preceding COVID-19, touch during the COVID-19 period is still captured by our measure, and our results must be understood in that context.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study was designed to pilot the MITCH-62 and explore the possibility of a physical intimacy gap in men's same-sex friendships, questions of practical significance and predictive validity remain; namely, is the observed intimacy gap linked to friendship quality and mental health outcomes among men? Extending this work to include the measures necessary to investigate these questions is a critical next step in our program of research. Similarly, there are many masculine norms with plausible implications for men's experience of and capacity for physical intimacy in their same-sex friendships (e.g., competitiveness, self-reliance, risk-taking, aggression; Mahalik, 2003) that we did not explore in this study but are investigating in ongoing work.

Limitations of the MITCH-62 point toward additional areas for future research. First, to reduce participant burden, we deployed the MITCH-62 in such a way that assumes experience with a behavior is indicative of a capacity for that behavior. While this assumption may hold for many instances of platonic touch, we acknowledge the many other instances where it might not. To ensure results regarding the intimacy gap are not an artifact of design choices, follow-up research should present the complete list of MITCH-62 behaviors for Round 1 and Round 2 to assess experience and capacity independently and randomize administration of Rounds 1 and 2 to confirm findings are not sensitive to order effects. Second, the MITCH-62 captures openness to touch behaviors, not the desire to engage in touch behaviors. This distinction has implications for the intimacy gap, as it remains to be seen whether the experience-desire gap is smaller than the experience-capacity gap. That said, even if more modest in size, the experience-desire gap may be of greater practical significance, as not engaging in behaviors you actively desire is likely to be experienced more negatively than not engaging in behaviors you are merely open to. Subsequent research should investigate whether a gap between men's experience with and desires for physical intimacy in their same-sex friendships exists and compare the size, correlates, and consequences of the experience-capacity and experience-desire gaps. Third, the MITCH-62 does not account for frequency of touch, only degree of intimacy. We are currently addressing this limitation via research expanding the measure to capture touch frequency and exploring the independent and compounding impacts of frequency and intimacy of touch on men's relational well-being.

Lastly, demographic results suggest areas for future inquiry. Findings related to employment status raise questions about the role social institutions (e.g., work, school) play in shaping platonic physical intimacy in men's friendships. Negative correlations between age and

our platonic intimacy outcomes suggest unique challenges for male friends in aging populations worthy of further investigation. Similarly, same-sex sexual attraction results highlight the need for research explicitly attending to how gay male culture and dynamics of sexual attraction may influence physical intimacy outcomes in sexual minority men's cross-and same-orientation friendships.

Implications

Our findings have implications for improving men's same-sex friendships, health, and life satisfaction. Results revealing MC-Boost to be positively associated with our intimacy outcomes suggest that those looking to intervene in the lives of men to improve their relationships may want to consider an affirmative approach that centers aspects of masculine performance that can be beneficial (e.g., touch between men) as opposed to a deficit model that positions masculinity as a barrier that must be overcome to achieve positive relational ends. Further, our findings related to normative male alexithymia suggest that the benefits of helping men identify and communicate their emotions may extend to increasing touch in men's friendships – potentially amplifying the return on investment for work in this domain.

Lastly, we have identified four "intervention-ready" behaviors that participants rated above average in intimacy and where there was at least a 15-point disparity between capacity for and experience with that behavior: (1) close two-armed hug; (2) close one-armed hug; (3) distant two-armed hug; (4) distant one-armed hug. Interventions to increase touch in men's friendships may do well to target these behaviors, as the observed capacity-experience gap indicates room to acceptably increase the prevalence of those behaviors in men's same-sex friendships. Their above-average IRs also suggest that interventions targeting these behaviors may produce the most significant potential benefits. Moreover, as these are all greeting behaviors, the

commonplace nature of greetings should provide ample opportunity for intervention. Lastly, the most commonly experienced greeting behaviors (i.e., handshakes, fist-bumps, and high-fives) all had below-average mean IRs, so meaningful intimacy gains can be captured via interventions converting those behaviors into the more intimate, "intervention-ready" greeting behaviors. Given the sensitive nature of touch, more research is needed to explore ways to properly design, market, and administer interventions in this space.

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Table 1

Participant Demographics

Variable	*n*	%
Generation		
Gen Z	142	30.4%
Millennial	235	50.3%
Gen X	71	15.2%
Baby Boomer	19	4.1%
Race		
White	303	64.9%
Black or African American	35	7.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	0.9%
Asian	65	13.9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.2%
Hispanic or Latin American	37	7.9%
Mixed-Race / Multiracial	19	4.1%
Other	3	0.6%
Education		
Less than high school	8	1.7%
High school graduate	64	13.7%
Some college	134	28.7%
2-year degree	36	7.7%
4-year degree	160	34.3%
Professional degree	55	11.8%
Doctorate	10	2.1%
Employment Status		
Employed full-time	215	46.0%
Employed part-time	58	12.4%
Unemployed looking for work	75	16.1%
Unemployed not looking for work	20	4.3%
Retired	3	0.6%
Student	86	18.4%
Disabled	10	2.1%
Annual Income		
Less than $10,000	116	24.8%
$10,000 - $19,999	43	9.2%
$20,000 - $29,999	38	8.1%
$30,000 - $39,999	38	8.1%
$40,000 - $49,999	41	8.8%
$50,000 - $59,999	42	9.0%
$60,000 - $69,999	29	6.2%
$70,000 - $79,999	43	9.2%
$80,000 - $89,999	19	4.1%
$90,000 - $99,999	13	2.8%
$100,000 - $149,999	38	8.1%
More than $150,000	7	1.5%

Table 2

MITCH-62 Platonic and Sexualized Behaviors with Participant Data

Platonic Touch Behaviors	Intimacy Scores		Experience	Capacity
	M	SD		
Handshake	2.54	1.18	92.9%	98.7%
Fist Bump	2.85	1.04	88.7%	96.8%
High-Five	2.69	1.04	80.9%	97.6%
Pat on Back	2.58	0.96	62.7%	80.1%
One-Armed Hug (Close)	3.54	0.90	61.5%	79.0%
Two-Armed Hug (Close)	4.11	0.91	51.6%	69.0%
One-Armed Hug (Distant)	2.97	0.99	48.8%	79.2%
Shoulder Squeeze	2.92	0.97	48.0%	75.6%
Arm Over Shoulder	2.94	0.96	45.2%	66.8%
Punch	2.05	1.08	41.8%	57.8%
Performing Skill (Unintentional)	1.67	1.02	36.8%	53.3%
Two-Armed Hug (Distant)	3.25	1.00	28.7%	66.2%
Hand Games	1.96	1.05	25.7%	50.7%
Arm-Wrestling	1.94	0.99	25.3%	54.6%
Pat on Head	2.69	1.03	23.6%	50.1%
Slap	1.84	1.02	22.7%	42.0%
Sports Contact	1.90	1.04	22.5%	47.8%
Butt Slap (Clothed)	2.89	1.24	21.6%	32.8%
Carrying / Lifting	2.76	1.15	18.4%	36.6%
Chest Bump	2.45	1.08	17.8%	52.2%
Wrestling (Clothed)	2.57	1.22	16.7%	34.3%
Headlock / Choke	1.93	1.04	14.1%	29.6%
Kick	1.66	0.94	14.1%	36.2%
Dancing	2.82	1.13	12.2%	28.9%
Massage	3.48	1.24	10.7%	26.3%
Linking Arms	2.92	1.19	9.9%	29.3%
Testicle Tap	2.31	1.41	9.2%	13.1%
Huddle/Press Heads Together	2.36	1.19	8.6%	32.8%
Tickling	2.89	1.24	8.4%	16.5%
Holding Hands	3.35	1.27	8.1%	17.8%
First-Aid	2.22	1.33	8.1%	44.1%
Lay On	3.24	1.36	7.7%	16.9%
Cuddling (Clothed)	3.71	1.43	7.5%	14.1%
Pinching	2.14	1.13	7.3%	18.6%
Nipple-Twisting	2.45	1.35	7.1%	11.1%
Performing Skill (Intentional)	2.29	1.15	7.1%	28.5%
Peck (Other)	3.53	1.41	6.9%	14.6%
Interlocking Fingers	2.65	1.27	6.6%	21.8%
Applying Skincare	2.54	1.22	6.6%	24.8%

Spooning (Clothed)	3.59	1.41	5.1%	10.9%
Footsie	2.70	1.25	4.9%	13.1%
Peck (Mouth)	3.70	1.44	4.5%	8.8%
Wet Willy	2.00	1.15	3.4%	9.9%
Gaddaffi	3.04	1.58	1.9%	4.1%
Plucking	2.58	1.31	0.4%	2.4%

Sexualized Touch Behaviors	**Intimacy Scores**		**Experience**	**Capacity**
	M	**SD**		
Oral Sex (Receive)	3.92	1.59	5.4%	10.3%
Oral Sex (Give)	3.92	1.59	5.1%	9.2%
Masturbation (Give)	3.77	1.62	3.9%	9.2%
Tongue-Kiss / Make-Out	3.93	1.54	3.6%	7.3%
Masturbation (Receive)	3.76	1.62	3.6%	9.4%
Sexualized Game / Ritual	3.06	1.56	3.6%	9.9%
Cuddling (Naked)	3.96	1.54	3.2%	6.4%
Dry Humping	3.46	1.56	3.2%	6.6%
Butt Slap (Naked)	3.28	1.54	3.0%	9.6%
Anal Sex (Receive)	3.91	1.61	2.8%	6.6%
Anal Sex (Give)	3.91	1.61	2.6%	6.4%
Spooning (Naked)	3.88	1.55	2.6%	6.0%
Masturbation (Incidental)	3.56	1.63	2.1%	6.2%
Group Sex	3.57	1.60	1.7%	6.9%
Wrestling (Naked)	3.31	1.63	1.1%	3.2%
Group Masturbation	3.47	1.66	0.9%	5.4%
Cock-Docking	3.67	1.65	0.2%	3.4%

Note. Intimacy Scores were calculated by averaging across participants' 5-point Likert scale intimacy ratings for each of the given behaviors. The "Experience" column represents participants who indicated engaging in said behavior with their male friends. The "Capacity" column represents participants who indicated engaging in said behavior or being open to engaging in said behavior if the opportunity presented itself.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson's Correlation Coefficients of Continuous Regression Variables

Variable			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	M	***SD***														
1. Age	30.83	10.58	1	**.30***	-.05	**-.13***	-.03	**-.21***	.08	.06	.03	-.09	.01	.01	**-.23***	**-.24***
2. Income	4.87	3.38		1	-.05	**-.12**	-.06	**-.14***	**.16***	**.13***	.09	-.06	-.00	-.01	-.07	-.10*
3. SS Attraction	1.46	1.03			1	-.04	**-.11**	**.12***	**-.24***	**-.15***	**-.10**	-.07	**.52***	**.55***	**.23***	**.26***
4. H Preference	3.16	0.65				1	**.12**	-.07	-.06	-.04	.00	.09	-.01	-.04	.07	.03
5. Avoidance	3.30	0.92					1	**.11**	.04	.08	.03	**.67***	**-.10**	**-.10**	**-.14***	**-.17***
6. Anxiety	3.62	1.27						1	.05	**.14***	.00	**.19***	.09	**.12**	**.16***	**.16***
7. Homohysteria	2.68	1.45							1	**.70***	**.42***	**.10**	**-.18***	**-.20***	**-.18***	**-.28***
8. MC-Threat	2.69	1.20								1	**.59***	**.12***	**-.17***	**-.14***	**-.10**	**-.19***
9. MC-Boost	4.01	0.99									1	.03	**-.13***	**-.14***	.07	.01
10. Alexithymia	4.05	1.19										1	**-.12**	**-.09**	**-.16***	**-.16***
11. SI Experienced	2.08	8.47											1	**.71***	**.31***	**.26***
12. SI Capacity	5.07	15.41												1	**.24***	**.34***
13. PI Experienced	30.41	22.26													1	**.84***
14. PI Capacity	49.54	28.94														1

Note. We found significant bivariate correlations among some predictor variables, but variance inflation factors below 5 and tolerances above 0.25 alleviate collinearity concerns. Significant correlations are in bold. * = p<.001

Variable Key: SS Attraction = Same-Sex Sexual Attraction; H Preference = Homosocial Preference; Avoidance = Attachment Avoidance; Anxiety = Attachment Anxiety; MC = Masculinity Contingency; Alexithymia = Normative Male Alexithymia; SI = Sexualized Intimacy; PI = Platonic Intimacy