

Online Male Escorts Defy Stereotypes

by David Mariner

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Mike is not unlike other busy students in Washington DC. A twenty-five year old gay man, he balances classes, studying, and a part time job. Also, he fits in occasional escort clients he meets online. The extra money he makes from escorting helps supplement a often tight student budget.

Mike has never hustled on the street, or worked through an escort agency. He sees himself as a responsible professional. Mike sets his own schedule, and his own limits, and he tells guys up front that he's only going to play safe.

Mike may not fit your picture of a sex worker, but a new study published in the Journal AIDS Care shows he's representative of a new generation of online male escorts.

The study by Hunter College Psychology professor Jeffrey T. Parsons shows that online escorts don't go into sex work out of desperation. Parsons found that most of the men didn't choose to be escorts for survival (food, drugs and shelter in return for sex). Rather, they use escorting money for graduate school tuition, housing, gym memberships and vacations.

Mike just wishes there was less stigma around escorting: "I wish the community got the message that hiring is convenient and enjoyable, and there is no reason to be embarrassed."

The study also showed that male escorts play an important role in relaying information about safer sex to their clients. Parsons describes escorts as "vectors of safer sex education", and emphasizes that they can share information with with closeted clients, who are often difficult to reach.

Companion and Porn Star Jake Gianelli agrees: "I am known by my clients in this industry as the psycho-sexual surrogate therapist and I do educate clients about safe sex. I am amazed these days there are so many people asking to bareback. Are they looking for a death sentence? I am negative and find myself always having to educate clients about modes of transmissions of disease."

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