

Review of *Male Sex Work and Society*. Edited by Victor Minichiello and John Scott (eds.) Harrington Press, 2014, 512 pages, \$120 (cloth).

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Men have been selling sex in every country in the world and as far back as we can go in recorded history. Until recently, however, this phenomenon was practically ignored by the social sciences, in frank contrast to the study of women who sell sex. What relatively few studies existed of male sex work up to the 1970s eschewed what Laura Agustín, in a 2005 *Sexualities* article, termed “a cultural studies approach” (2005), concentrating instead on the medicalization of the male sex worker, generally understood as deviant, when not openly classified as mentally ill. Even after the onset of gay liberation, men who sold sex were generally overlooked by social scientific researchers, outside of the field of DST/HIV prevention. As a result, we know relatively little about male sex work as compared to female sex work and, up to now, prospective scholars interested in the topic have had to draw together articles from diverse sources. No introductory primer has been available.

Male Sex Work and Society (MSWaW) attacks this problem and succeeds, for the most part. Editors Minichiello and Scott have produced a beautiful, diverse, wide-ranging and highly accessible collection of articles, designed to introduce the topic to novices or to researchers (like myself) who are specialists in related areas. *Male Sex Work and Society* expands our view of men selling sex from the stereotype of street hustling, following axes of interest that transcend the criminal and medical and into settings beyond Western Europe and North America.

The book has its defects. It tries to bite off more than it can chew. Even its 512 pages are not enough to more than briefly present the topics touched upon and each of its four sections could be expanded into a collection of volumes. Furthermore, as an introduction to the field, it stretches itself thin and, as a result, may strike specialists as superficial. These weaknesses, however, are not the editors' fault, but a reflection on the relative lack of consolidation of male sex work research and the concentrations of the relatively small number of scholars engaged in studying it. A more unaccountable lapse is the lack of an article giving an overview of the available English-language bibliography.

Where *MSWaS* really shines is in its historical overviews, which are concentrated in the first section. Of particular interest here are the comparisons and contrasts with female sex work, as well as the enduring and historical linkages between male sex work and cultures of homosexuality. The prize essay, to my mind, is the first chapter by Mack Freidman (the only author not right from a position in the health or academic fields). Friedman's overview of the history of male sex work in the west from ancient times to the present brings up some uncomfortable points, the main one being that male sex workers paradoxically seem to have experienced better working conditions in more highly homophobic societies. Freidman is ably backed up by Kerwin Kaye's essay concentrating on modern times and Russell Sheaffer's thoughtful analysis of the portrayal of male sex work in film.

The second section is economic in focus and contains Allan Tyler's work on advertising male sexual services. Trevor Logan concludes the section with an economic analysis of male sex work, concentrating on hierarchies of commodification within the field. This article reads particularly well with the immediately following (the first of the third section) by Scott, Minichiello and Denton Callander, focusing on the clients of male sex workers. Clients are mostly ignored in female sex work research and it is to *MSWaS*' great credit that it presents us not only with an article of this nature, but one of such high quality, which resumes a great part of the available literature on the topic.

Half of section three's articles deal with sex work health issues. David Bimbi and Juline Koken tackle the mental health aspects of male sex work and public health policies and practices with regards to male sex workers. Mary Laing and Justin Gaffney ably supplement these article with their overview of health and wellness service availability. Thomas Crofts also tackles the thorny topic of regulation of male sex work and asks why this has provoked less debate than in the case of female sex work. Christian Grov and Michael Smith's work on gay subcultures and sex work rounds out the chapter, returning to a common them in the volume: male sex work's articulation with changing attitudes regarding male-male sex.

The fourth part of *MSWaS* is, to my mind, the most problematic. Here, the editors make a stab at dealing with male sex work across the globe. Of the volume's 25 authors, however, only is drawn from countries outside the anglosphere (the United Kingdom and those English-speaking countries and territories settled by it). The problems with this become most apparent in Paul Boyce's and Gordon Isaac's article on Southern and Eastern Africa (which deals with 4 ex-British colonies and Namibia) and in Minichiello, Tinashe Dune, Carlos Disogra and Rodrigo Mariño's chapter on Latin America. As a sex work scholar based in Brazil, this last article disappointed me. Brazil contains a third of the region's population and has a long and distinguished history of male sex work studies, but it and its researchers are barely mentioned. Travis Kong's chapter on China offers up a fascinating glimpse of a burgeoning commercial sex scene that has exploded with China's urban growth, however. The three articles on European contexts – Heide Castañeda on migrant workers in Germany and Paul Maginn and Graham Ellison on Ireland – are all well done and informative, but it seems to me that a larger, more regional focus might have been a better choice, giving the sweeping nature of the section's chapters on Africa and Latin America.

Overall, however, I highly recommend this volume, especially to researchers just getting involved with this field or to educators who are looking to break students out of their beliefs that only women sell sex. Here's hoping that *Male Sex Work and Society* is only the first of more collaborations of this sort. Publisher Bill Cohen – long one of the most prolific LGBT editors – should seriously consider expanding this volume into a series.

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