

## PREFACE

Every author or volume editor would like to think of his or her work as timely, and we are no different from every other person who has had a good idea for a book. However, the idea was not entirely the editors' own. Back in 2010 we were contacted by an enthusiastic publisher in New York City about several journal articles we had written on male sex work. The publisher, Bill Cohen, had cofounded the Haworth Press in 1978, building it from scratch to carry over 200 academic journals, including eight in LGBT studies, and several thousand monographs and textbooks in the behavioral and social sciences, health care, business studies, and many other fields. Bill sold the Haworth Press to Taylor & Francis/Routledge in 2007, but he retained the trademark to Harrington Park Press, a Haworth imprint, which specialized in LGBT topics, particularly psychology and health care. After some further correspondence with Bill, we agreed to develop this volume, which we hoped would capture some of the new understandings of male sex work that have emerged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Bill had eyed a noticeable gap in a field he knew well, and it is fair to say that we are fortunate to have a publisher who is as enthusiastic about the subject matter as we are. To provide but one example of his commitment and enthusiasm, a week hardly passed during the first 12 months of this project when Bill did not forward to us newly published peer-reviewed journal articles pertaining to male sex work, as well as several new dissertations. So, while an investigation of the subject matter is indeed timely, so too were the circumstances that led to this book's publication.

Saying something new about male sex work is a challenging task, as there is only a small handful of scholars researching this topic. Moreover, as a subject area, researchers tend to dip in and out of male sex work, thus it often is seen as a sideline in the broader study of sexual health, gender, or sexualities. Providing the sort of comprehensive coverage of the topic we aspired to was not easy; apart from the paucity of research to draw from, much of the existing research contained significant gaps.

Since emerging as a socially troublesome population during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, men who trade sex for money or other compensation have assumed many roles in research and popular culture, most notably, as psycho-pathological agents, vectors of disease, and, most recently, as sex workers. This is an exciting time to be researching male sex workers (MSWs), as new understandings of male bodies and masculinity have emerged in recent years that have allowed us to reassess what we thought we knew about male sex work.

On another level, advances in telecommunications have transformed the way male sex work has been structured and organized during much of the modern era. Two immediate effects of this transformation are that male sex work is now part of the global economy, and that the strict demarcation between public and private space—which had previously structured the sex work environment—has been eroded. However, just as new communications technologies have expanded the reach of male sex workers, they also have provided new opportunities for researchers of this stigmatized activity, making it easier to contact a broad range of MSWs and their clients, as well as to disseminate their research and make contact with each other.

This book is one example of the opportunities new technologies provide, as it would have been almost impossible to conceive and assemble even 20 years ago: the research that forms the backbone of this book simply did not yet exist. The research at that time focused largely on the health of street-based sex workers in Western urban settings. While the research in this book does not ignore that group, it also explores the other spaces where men sell sex. Moreover, although this compilation does not ignore the impact sex work has on the health of MSWs, the contributors are also more broadly interested in how the health of these men is impacted by contemporary social, cultural, and environmental forces.

So where to begin with such a book? From the outset we wanted this book to be distinct from any other writings on male sex work and sex work more generally. For one, we thought it curious that much of the literature on male sex work failed to capture the erotic and physical nature of its subject matter. There seemed to be a near palpable gulf between the sex-charged popular cultural representations of male sex work and the drier academic literature, which in striving for objectivity

often made the male sex work encounter seem sterile and mechanical. Reading such works, it is difficult to comprehend why anyone would want to be employed in such an industry, let alone pay money for such services. And yet the industry was growing, and MSWs were increasingly telling researchers that they had chosen their work and enjoyed what they did. Furthermore, the clients of sex workers were increasingly being presented in studies as a broad cross-section of the male population, rather than as the deviant subpopulation that had characterized their presentation in the past. Therefore, we were prompted to consider the male body as an object of agency, pleasure, and desire.

Thus it was that from the outset we wanted this book to provide broad coverage of male sex work. We sought to include multiple disciplinary perspectives, moving well beyond the public health or sociological focus of much of the earlier literature. We also wanted to capture a sense of the cross-cultural variations in the male sex encounter. Rather than simplifying or condensing our subject matter, we have brought together varied voices that can testify to its complexity and rich diversity. We hope and trust that this book, which presents original research from both young and well-established scholars in the field, brings both breadth and depth to the study of male sex work and gives coherence to the emerging voices of MSWs who are telling their stories. It also provides a broad overview of the literature on MSWs, including studies that have emerged over the last 20 years, and identifies areas for future research.

### **Acknowledgments**

Producing this international collection has been both a challenge and a privilege. The privilege lies in working with scholars who are researching this important topic so we can gain—and provide—a better understanding of masculinities, sexualities, and men's health, specifically those who are involved with male sex work and their clients. The main challenges were to bring together a diverse group of researchers from around the globe, and to meet our publication deadlines. As noted above, we are most appreciative of the publisher's dedication, patience, and confidence in our ability to bring the project to a conclusion. The volume is the collective effort of the editors, all the contributors, and the

publisher, working as a team. We greatly appreciate the determination of both Bill Cohen and senior book editor Richard Koffler to make this book successful, and one of the most comprehensive on the topic. We leave it to reviewers and readers to judge whether we have achieved this objective.

We owe special gratitude to the intellectual contributions of all the authors, whose research has provided numerous contemporary insights into men's lives.

We also want to acknowledge the very valuable input of Patrick Ciano, who designed the book, and various personnel working with Harrington Park Press, including associate editor Dody Riggs and operations manager Art Lizza, permissions editor Adele Hutchinson, lexicographer Katherine Isaacs, proofreader Jane Gebhart, and indexer Dan Connolly.

We have included illustrations in the book to highlight the visibility of the male sex industry in popular culture and to show how we as a society portray male escorts. We are grateful to all the public and private organizations that have given us permission to reproduce these images.

Finally, we have been most fortunate to have the support of our colleagues for this project, in particular Denton Callander, Robyn Rogers, and Sandra Coe.

Thank you all—you have allowed us to produce a book that not only is timely but has something new to say about a very old topic.

*Victor Minichiello and John Scott*