

# Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's & Gender Studies

---

Volume 13

Issue 1 *Race, Resistance, Reason:  
Contextualizing Racial Epistemologies,  
Imagining Social Justice*

Article 10

---

6-1-2015

## Male Sex Work and Society by Victor Minichiello & John Scott, Harrington Press, 2014

Lorna Barton Glasgow Caledonian University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/wagadu>

---

### Recommended Citation

Barton, Lorna Glasgow Caledonian University (2015) "Male Sex Work and Society by Victor Minichiello & John Scott, Harrington Press, 2014," *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's & Gender Studies*: Vol. 13: Iss. 1, Article 10.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/wagadu/vol13/iss1/10>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Cortland. It has been accepted for inclusion in Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's & Gender Studies by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Cortland. For more information, please contact [DigitalCommonsSubmissions@cortland.edu](mailto:DigitalCommonsSubmissions@cortland.edu).

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

*Reviewed by* Lorna Barton  
Glasgow Caledonian University

Intriguing and engaging from the outset, *Male Sex Work and Society* is a significant collection of articles from a range of male sex work researchers, both familiar and new to the field. They successfully shed the well-coined societal stereotype of the 'male hustler'; a deviant and pathological sub-populous, revealing a more complex and nuanced reality of a broad cross-section of men involved in the sex industry. The articles focus on the reality of informed choice when entering and remaining in the industry and of male sex workers' honesty in taking pleasure from the service they provide and the variety of male clients they provide for. Further to this, it places male sex workers and their practices in the wider academic and global context, discussing the possibility that it is a male sex workers time, intimacy and the sex provided that is the commodity, rather than his body. Research within the articles also indicate high levels of educational achievement of those who regularly engage in providing sex work services.

The collection itself is arranged into four related themes; historical, economic, including online marketing and advertising, social/ cultural and global. Within these themes the authors challenge political and societal heteronormative assumptions while contextually situating the male sex worker within them. The themes link with relevance through their grouped chapters, giving the reader a broad and comprehensive base of knowledge, including both qualitative and quantitative data, despite statistical limitations at times and pertinent social theories. In addition, the themes uncover a surprisingly positive picture of male sex work in today's global market; one of innovation, ingenuity and business-mindedness.

One particularly interesting chapter is of the male sex worker portrayed on celluloid. As a film fan, this chapter spoke most because of the power that Hollywood and cinema have, either as a catalyst for change or to perpetuate stereotypes over the decades. The chapter itself spans six decades of film making from the 1930's to 1990's. Despite the negative connotations of the 'male hustler' in many of the films explored in this chapter, including *Midnight Cowboy* and *American Gigolo*, they were sensitively approached. Rather than condemning the directors' portrayal of the characters within the films, the author peels back the layers of the socially constructed caricature, delving into their fictional psyche while revealing their possible emotions, struggles and realities buried under the societal taboo. Until the 1990's movement of New Queer Cinema, the perpetuation of the deviant on film, a pathological man, who, for the most part hates himself, his homosexual acts and the betrayal of his heterosexuality by participating in male sex work solely for survival, illustrates the influence of outdated medical rhetoric on Hollywood's portrayal of homosexuality. It also confirms its reach on society's conscious and subconscious, influencing opinion and moral outlook through a negative and demeaning lens.

The chapter latterly heralds the fight back against mainstream film's typical portrayal of homosexuals, described in the text as, "repressed, lonely fuck-ups and/ or killers" (p. 64), through the work of New Queer Cinema, a movement during the 1990's. It re-constructed the hustler as gay, from the start, in films such as *The Living End* and *My Own Private Idaho* confronting heteronormative culture through a queer lens of fluid contextual sexuality and existence. The only weakness of this chapter is that it ends abruptly, leaving the reader without a queer cinematic movement to continue the work of New Queer Cinema in challenging heteronormative conjecture while causing a positive wave of social dissonance and change.

There are few limitations to this collection of articles. However, it could have been beneficial to have included a chapter on male sex workers who identify as heterosexual, exclusively servicing female or male clients, such as the Brazilian male sex worker population known as Michês. There were brief acknowledgments of heterosexual workers within the collection but a depth of exploration of their lives and client base was lacking. Overall, this collection is extremely well researched and passionately written, deeming it a necessary companion for anyone who has an interest in the broad and engaging field of male sex work research.

Lorna Barton

Glasgow Caledonian University

[lorna.barton@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:lorna.barton@gcu.ac.uk)