

“Doing Sex: Men, Masculinity and Sexual Practices.” Report on the conference at Newcastle University, July 13–14, 2017

ANNIKA STRAUSS

From the 13th until the 14th July 2017 the conference “Doing Sex: Men, Masculinity and Sexual Practices” took place at Newcastle University in the United Kingdom. The three organizers FRANK G. KARIORIS, Assistant Professor of Sociology & Director of the Center for Critical Gender Studies, American University of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan, JONATHAN A. ALLAN, Canada Research Chair in Queer Theory Brandon University, Canada, and CHRIS HAYWOOD, Reader in Critical Masculinity Studies, Newcastle University, are experienced researchers in the area of men and masculinity studies. The conference aimed to bring together the study of sexual practices and desires and critical studies of men and masculinities. The origins of the conferences are based on discussions that took place at a recent conference on men and masculinity when the organizers found themselves frustrated due to the noticeable absence of discussions on men, masculinity and sex. Men doing sex is a marginalized topic, mostly located at the fringes of conferences. With this event they attempted to increase the visibility about men and sex in academic research.

The conference took up some of the provocations of sexology in the twentieth century to think through men’s sexuality today. According to Alfred Charles Kinsey there is an inherent paradox in “man’s absorbing interest in sex and his astounding ignorance of it; his desire to know and his unwillingness to face the facts.” The organizers stressed in the CFP, that despite some of the failings and problematics in Kinsey, Masters & Johnson, and other Sexologists, it is critical to reflect not simply as criticism of these, but also what they are suggestive and enlightening of. The emphasis of the conference was therefore supposed to be on “practices.” What do men doing sex look like beyond the common ascriptions and assumptions? What do men *actually* do sexually? To ask, explore and answer those ques-

tions honestly though, may challenge some conventional gender, queer or feminist politics.

The conference programme included presentations from diverse areas of inquiry, with speakers from a range of different backgrounds and perspectives. It was opened by a session trying to give *Directions Forward for Men and Masculinity Studies*. MARK MC CORMACK, Professor of Sociology at the University of Roehampton, London, spoke on *Querying “not gay” theorizing in masculinity studies: The contributions of “mostly straight” research to the debate*. He was followed by SERENA PETRELLA, Assistant Professor and Chair, Sociology; Gender & Women’s studies, Brandon University, and her talk on *“Ethical” Doms and Ambivalent Bottoms: Desire, Mastery and Surrender in the Power Play of Male Kinksters*. The last speaker of the panel was MARK LIMMER, Lancaster University, Centre for Health Inequalities Research, who talked about *Young Masculinities and Pornography—Disrupting the Public Discourse in the UK*. These talks were an adequate kick-off for the conference as they touched on some of the key issues that were discussed during the coming two days: challenging the bipolar categorization of heterosexual and homosexual orientation, understanding local cultures and epistemologies of kinky sex and men’s relation to and interaction with porn and social media like dating apps. The following panels were organized multiple track with two sessions taking place at a time.

13th July

The *panel themes* on Thursday comprised *Exploring New Sex Practices and Their Impact* (Peter Kaiser: Sodomasochism as a means for male to transcendent post-modern gender roles and equality; Carl Bonner-Thompson: Anticipating touch: haptic geographies of Grindr* encounters; Belia B. Schuurmann & Iris Poelen: Tales of Desire, Deceit and Demasculinization: Online Representations by Sex Tourist), *Men, Masculinity and Global Transformations* (Annika Strauss: Doing Gay and Feeling Female—A Queer Narrative from a Psychiatric Setting in Mumbai, India; Valeria Quaglia: Understanding the intersection between masculinity construction, sexuality practices and men’s health: An Italian Study; Tyrone Ali: Love, Intimacy and Sexuality: A Gendered Analysis Among Caribbean

Men), *City and Sex* (Luisa Schneider: Bambrusing*, bassing, sexing, romancing: masculinities and sexual practices among young men in Freetown, Sierra Leone; Jamie Hakim: Chemsex and the city: queering collectivity in neoliberal London; Justin Hunt: Comedown with me), *Being Male, Becoming Male* (Katherine Jones: Mutuality Reframed: The Family Planning Association's "Men Too" Campaign, 1984–1985; Catherine Gallais: The "sex talk:" paternal masculinities and ideas of male sexuality; M. F. Ogilvie: The Homoerotic Tendencies of Elite Male Athletes), *The Viral/Virile* (Colin R. Johnson: Fuck My Wife; or, the Erotic Logic of Cuckoldry; Jaime García-Iglesias: Viral Masculinity: Who are the "Real Men" Who Want to Get HIV?; João Florêncio: Dark Ecology, HIV and CUMmunity* in Bareback Porn) and *Literary Sex* (Stian Kristensen: Becoming Sex: Abjection and Subjection; Samuel Williams: Inclusive Masculinity (or Not Quite) in Bill Konigsberg's "Openly Straight;," Jonathan Allan: Foreskin Fictions: On Missing Out in Lisa Braver Moss's "The Measure of His Grief").

In the evening the keynote event took place at "The Roxy," a small, picturesque movie theatre, in the Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle. Here Prof. CLARISSA SMITH, University of Sunderland, gave her talk titled *Sex is the stimulus of life, and my daily caffeine: on being a regular consumer of pornography*. Smith is a founding co-editor of *Porn Studies* and a member of the editorial boards of *Journal of Gender Studies*, *Sexualities* and *Participations*.

In her talk she gave accounts of her current research that is concerned with sexual media and representations. Her interest lies in how people access and engage with pornographic materials and with other forms of sexualized products. In her talk it became clear that public perceptions of porn and representations in the media often are too stereotypic and one dimensional and furthermore often pathologize the consumption of porn. In contrast Smith illustrated with different quotes from a questionnaire of a broad study on porn consumption which various meanings porn can adopt for its consumers. The first conference day concluded with participants having a fruitful exchange in "The Gallery" of the Tyneside Cinema, enjoying a street food buffet, wine and inspiring conversations.

14th July

On Friday, the following *panel themes* lead conference attendants through the day: *Viewing and Consuming Porn* (John Mercer: Gay Pornography: Modern Masculinities and Popular Culture; Mark Limmer & Rachel Eastman: Masculinities Performed in on-line heterosexual pornography; Gareth Longstaff: Bodies that Splutter—Jouissance, Memory, and the Dangerous Pleasures of Bare-Back and Chem-Sex Porn), *Mobile Sex/Sexualities* (Rebecca Plante: Sexing the Irishman: Explorations of Media and Masculinities; Lénica R. Cruz Manjarrez & Pilar Albertin Carbó: Men and masculinities in the online dating social networks; Paul Michaels: The usage and experiences of deaf gay men using dating apps), *Men and Sex Work* (Monique Huysamen: Paid sex as a safe space: Exploring men's constructions of paying for sex; Victor Sacha Cova: Indigenous travesti sex workers and their clients in the Ecuadorian Amazon; Sam Miles: "I've never told anyone this before:" Co-constructing fieldwork intimacy in sex and sexuality research), *Changing Masculinities* (Eric Anderson: Inclusive Masculinity Theory; Rory Magrath: The core of IMT: Jocks attitudes towards homosexuality; Zander West: Being a sexual minority in college; Lois Morales: Inclusive masculinities among: A diverse religious sample of American high school students; Campbell Williams: Turning towards inclusivity in Community Sports; Adam White: No Greater Love: Bromances* among University Men), *Sex and the Law* (Katherine Parker: Illicit Sex and the Homonormative Legal Landscape; Alexander Maine: Seamless Continuum: PrEP, the courts, and the recognition of gay sex; Antónia Barradas: Stop Throwing Stones at Geni: How is EU Parliament Resolution 2013/2103 Going to Make the Sex-Buyer Accountable?) and *Death to the one Time Rule of Homosexuality* (Mark McCormack: Non-exclusive hetero-sexualities and mostly straights; Carol Shepherd: Recognizing and Promoting Bisexuality; Ryan Scoats: Towards the Male-Male-Female Threesome; Liam Wignall: Eroticizing the straight male anus; Charlie Fiddler: Generational perspectives on IMT; Eric Anderson: Future Directions of Men's Gender).

The conference finally closed with some remarks from the organizers and subsequently with a wine reception at the conference venue, the Research

Beehive. As a conclusive socializing event the reception resulted in pulling participants one last time into interesting conversations, discussing conference contents and engaging into further networking.

As the organizers mention in their message in the conference handout, holding a conference on men and sex had its challenges: “We were refused financial support from University Faculties, Gender Studies groups declined to circulate the conference information, as well as experiencing vitriol from others along the lines of being rapists and torturers. That reminded us that something fascinating happens when the focus is on men, especially their sexual practices. We have found that that there is often a disquiet, a kind of suspicious curiosity that both queries the legitimacy of the attention, but also questions one’s academic integrity.” Fortunately Frank, Jonathan and Chris managed to fight these obstacles successfully and facilitated a conference that opened the scope to explore the diversity and complexity of male sexual practices. Men’s sexual practices, more often than not, are pathologized, diagnosed, managed, and treated. This conference provided a platform for those undertaking research

in the field of masculinity and sexual practices and drew a multifaceted picture of what men doing sex can look like.

Note:

- * Grindr = Grindr is a social network app that is designed to help gay and bisexual men to meet others in their area // Bambrusing = describes a particular kind of rough sex // CUMmunity = a group of men having sex with men who are ‘fluid bonded’, that means no condoms are used during intercourse to prohibit contact with others’ ejaculate // bromance = The term bromance is used to describe a close, emotional bond between two men that doesn’t include sexual interactions and is distinguished by a particularly high level of emotional intimacy.



Annika Strauss, is a doctoral candidate in Social Anthropology at the Institut fuer Ethnologie/Westfaelische-Wilhelms-Universitaet Muenster and since April 2012 lecturer in Social Anthropology. Her areas of interest include the social anthropology of psychiatry, social anthropology of organisations, gender and sexuality studies and methodological reflexivity and self-reflection in the context of social anthropological fieldwork and teaching.
e-mail: annika.strauss@wwu.de

“Encounters, Translations and Transformations.” 9th International Congress on Traditional Asian Medicine. Kiel, August 06–12, 2017

SABINE LENKE-VON HEIDENFELD

The International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine (IASTAM) and the China Center of the CAU led by Professor ANGELIKA MESSNER invited more than 350 scientists from 30 different countries to Kiel to discuss the future of Asian medicine in the global health care service. In 30 sections on various regional and specific healing topics, 11 keynotes, a roundtable and 13 workshops, the theme of the congress “Encounters, Translations and Transformations” was examined with regard to

curative, diagnostic, therapeutic, historical, philological and market-related topics and issues.

The spectrum of the congress included the following countries and their (traditional) medicines: China (TCM), Japan (Kampo Medicine), Taiwan, Korea, India (Ayurveda, Yoga), Tibet (Sowa Rigpa Medicine) and the Arab-Greek Unani Medicine. One of the 30 sections dealt with Jesuit colonial medicine in South America. The highlights at the end were the *Paul Unschuld-Fest-Symposium* and the Basham Medal Awards to Dr. *Shizu Sakai* (Emer. Professor of Medical History at Juntendo University, Japan) and to Dr. *Judith Farquhar* (Emer. Professor-Max-Palevsky Professor of Anthropology of Social Sciences in the College, Faculty Director of the University of Chicago Center in Beijing).

At this point, it is not possible to cover the thematic range even close, so in my report I will focus on the two plenary sessions and the round table concerning the relationship between medicine/healing