**2024-25 AKC Spring Lecture 3:**

***Vulnerability and Control: Smartphones and Queer Men's Cultures of Intimacy***

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Good afternoon, everyone. As Edward was saying, my name is Jamie Hakim, and I'm a lecturer here at King's, and I'm also the lead author of the book that I'm here to talk about today, 'Digital intimacies, queer men, and smartphones in times of crisis.' So this lecture that I'm about to deliver has three parts. So first, I'm going to start by giving an overview of the book, specifically the methodological approach that we've taken, which is called Conjunctural Analysis. Then I'm going to talk you through the findings that we've arrived at using this approach. And finally, I'm going to reflect a little on the value of using conjunctural analysis to research questions of digital intimacy. And before I do any of that, I just want to thank everyone involved in the Associateship of King's College London for inviting me to speak. The lecture series looks fantastic, and really it's an honour to be included inside. Esteemed company. Okay.

So digital intimacy is the culmination of a five-year ESRC project that was hosted across King's College and Edinburgh University and was partnered with the sexual health organizations, the Terrence Higgins Trust, London Friends and Waverly Care. We were an interdisciplinary project drawing on expertise in cultural studies, sociology of health and social anthropology. The question that we set out to answer is how do UK-based queer men use their smartphones to negotiate their cultures of intimacy? In posing this question, we wanted to make a couple of different interventions. Firstly, much of work, much work in this area focuses on queer men's hookup app or dating app use. And whilst hookup apps have been absolutely central to what we're calling the smartphone, mediated intimacies of the queer men that we ended up speaking to, other features of their smartphones have too, and by looking at these, we've been able to capture hitherto underexplored dynamics of these intimate cultures. But we also wanted to make an intervention in terms of the methodological approach that we've taken.

So this approach is called conjunctural analysis, and it emerged in the 1970s at the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies under the directorship of Stuart Hall. Conjunctural analysis was developed in response to theoretical debates that were happening in British Marxism over the role that the economy has in determining other aspects of a society, the political, the technological, the social, the cultural, the ideological and so on. Against what some have termed, vulgar Marxism, which understood that the economy determines all other aspects of a society. Conjunctural analysis sees each of these aspects of having equal capacity to over-determine each other in complex and unpredictable ways. The point of conjunctural analysis is to work out how these different aspects of society are shaping each other at a given moment in time, or in the language, historical conjuncture. In cultural studies, this is often done by analyzing a particular cultural formation in relation to the historical conjuncture in which it has emerged.

Different subcultures, moral panics, forms of pop music are just some of the cultural formations that have been subject to conjunctural analysis. Taking this approach allows us to consider not only the historical significance, but also the shape and direction that the society in which they've emerged is moving at a particular moment in time. So to give a concrete example of what this looks like, let's turn to the first piece of research produced by the CCCS that explicitly uses the term conjunctural analysis to describe what it's doing. The collectively authored 'Policing the crisis' published in 1978. The cultural formation that they analysed was the racialised moral panic on mugging that appeared across the UK media in the 1970s. Contrary to popular opinion, which understood this moral panic as directly reflecting an increase in young black boys involved in mugging, 'Policing the crisis' concluded that this panic was instead symptomatic of the multifaceted crisis that the UK was experiencing in the 1970s. And for those of you unfamiliar with British history in the 1970s, sorry, for those of you unfamiliar with British history, the 1970s has become a short -hand for social crisis, whose features included out-of-control inflation, multiple general elections, power blackouts, disruptive trade union activity, as well as countercultural activism.

The book argued that in an attempt to gain control over these crises, one of the strategies adopted by the ruling classes was to frame them not in political terms, but instead, in terms of criminality, law and order. For instance, the counterculture was simply a collection of drug dealers. The trade unions were militant thugs. Now, the media panic on mugging was an attempt by the ruling classes to displace the generalized feeling of anxiety caused by living through this crisis onto black working class youth, who, the discourse went, simply needed better policing, hence 'Policing the crisis'. The authors called the ideology that underpinned the strategy authoritarian populism, which was retrospectively understood to lay the groundwork for the success of the right -wing Margaret Thatcher in the general election the year after the book was published.

This is conjunctural analysis because they took the media panic on mugging, and analysed it not only to understand its internal operations, but also, and more importantly, to illuminate key aspects of the wider conjuncture in which this panic emerged. Now, cultures of intimacy, queer, digital or otherwise, are rarely the subject of conjunction analysis. However, we at the project have found this approach beneficial in several ways. It moves beyond an exclusive focus on the platforms and technologies through which these intimacies are mediated. And it also encourages us to look outside an exclusive focus on queer social and cultural histories, which are so often the analytical frames used to make sense of queer men's social and cultural practices. Instead, conjunctural analysis foregrounds the fact that queer men inhabit the world as much as any other social group, albeit from a specific social location, and our cultures of intimacy and the way they are mediated are therefore shaped by a much wider range of social forces.

This has allowed us to see how queer men's smartphone-mediated cultures of intimacy are shaped by wider conjunctural dynamics, not often included in the analysis of these cultures, giving us a different understanding of their significance for queer men, as well as the worlds that we inhabit. it has also helped us understand the current conjuncture that analysing other cultural formations do not allow us to see. The domains of intimacy, of sexuality and embodiment are rarely, if ever, used by practitioners of conjunctural analysis to understand the shape and direction of particular conjunctures. These practitioners frequently focus on capital B politics, often election results for this purpose. And as I hope you'll see by the end of this talk, I believe there is real value in analysing cultures of sex and intimacy to gain a sense of a historical moment. Even though these domains are frequently understood to be personal and private, from the point of view of conjunctural analysis, they are constructed through or over-determined by their complex interrelationships to all the other domains that constitute a social formation.

Therefore, analysing them gives a unique perspective on the shape and direction that social formation is moving in, that analysing politics and economics does not. Specifically, as I'm about to show, using cultures of intimacy as a way into conjunctural analysis gives access to, in Raymond Williams's words, the structure of feeling of a conjuncture, the desires, affect, hopes and fears that circulate through a society, during a particular moment in time. Now, to explain how we use conjunctural analysis, I'm going to very briefly gloss over the methods that we adopted, and I'm happy to talk about this more in the discussion after.

So the project had three what we call work packages. Work package one explored the material conditions in which queer men use their smartphones to negotiate the cultures of intimacy. For instance, the technological infrastructures of their mediation, the physical spaces when negotiations take place, and the broader economic and political conditions which shape them. Work package two analysed how these cultures were represented in popular culture. So we performed an analysis of representations of queer men's smartphone mediated intimacies on TV, film and social media. And in the final work package, we interviewed 43 queer men about how they use their smartphones to negotiate these cultures. The interviews were qualitative, in-depth, and semi-structured. And this slide represents the demographic breakdown of our sample of queer men. And as much as possible, we try to be kind of as diverse as possible. I guess the key thing to pull out is that 33 of them were cis- gendered men, but 10 of them were either trans or non-binary. And so we wanted to include those sorts of perspectives in the category of queer men when we're doing this. Something that isn't often done in the field, I have to say. The analysis that we did brings together the data collected, kind of looks across the work packages together. Okay.

So, our findings, two major themes have emerged from our research. The first theme is vulnerability, and this emerged in two overlapping forms. The first was the ambivalent sense of vulnerability our participants wanted to feel in their intimate encounters, but that could sometimes feel like too much to bear. The second was the vulnerability to different forms of violence that our participants might face as they pursued their cultures of intimacy. Now, the second major theme was the use of the smartphone to gain a sense of control over these different forms of vulnerability. Okay, so in relation to the first type of vulnerability, we opened every interview that we did with the question, what does intimacy mean to you? And a really remarkable number of our participants answered by using the word vulnerability. So here are some examples.

Thomas says "vulnerability is the key to intimacy for me."

Miguel says, "I think intimacy is you being comfortable with your vulnerabilities with another person."

Gavin describes it as "mutual vulnerability."

Abedisi describes it as "ritualized vulnerability,"

and Luca says, "I think I'm experiencing intimacy when I'm really putting myself out there and feeling vulnerable."

Now, these quotes refer to the whole range of intimacies practiced by our participants, whether they were talking about monogamous, open or polyamorous relationships, dates, casual or regular hookups, or platonic friendships. So this is Miguel talking about the vulnerability of a more ephemeral intimacy. He says,

"when you are say naked that's when you're most vulnerable because you have no clothes and the clothes that you wear are armour so when you're stripped no pun intended you are your most vulnerable I do feel like when you share that with someone it doesn't have to be super meaningful but it is you presenting yourself at your most vulnerable you're allowing someone to see that and to experience that with you. And that can be a really good thing. For some people, it can be a really terrible thing. And there's a lot of people that are not comfortable with that."

Okay, so I've used this quote here for two reasons. The first is to show that vulnerability is involved even, and perhaps especially in casual sex encounters. The second is because this quote highlights the ambivalences of this sort of vulnerability. It can both be really good and really terrible, something that begins to account for our second thing, the use of smartphones in an attempt to control these vulnerable feelings. Now this brings us to the second type of vulnerability, the vulnerability to the various violences that queer men face in their pursuit of intimacy. In the book, we use the word violent capaciously to refer to the range of physical, emotional, and symbolic violences that operate at different scales and intensities. So some of these were digital. For example, Abedisi mentioned the possibility of being catfished, saying,

"once you go into Grindr, you don't really know who these people are, and you know it could be a catfish."

Anthony, a therapist, talks about the dangers of what people in digital media studies call context collapse. He says,

"I think that's also one bad thing with online even if you don't talk to that specific person, if I had a client who saw me, [he said he's a therapist,] I don't know, talking about all my favorite sexual positions, all that kind of stuff on Grindr, would I be taken seriously as a professional?"

Then there were the offline violences interviewees faced participating in their cultures of intimacy, homophobic, racist, transphobic, abelists, and so on. To illustrate the multifacities and intersectional nature of these violences, I'm going to draw on just one interview. The interview we did with our participant, Uddam. So Uddam identifies as a British-Asian gay man. In his interview, he talked about facing such a strong degree of religious homophobia from his traditional Sikh parents that he moved out of his family home. He also talked about racism that he faced on the gay scene. Uddam also lives with cerebral palsy, which affects his motor function, including his speech. And he talked to us very candidly and movingly about the different forms of violence that he experienced different aspects of his intimate life. Many of these violent encounters happened because people took advantage of his decreased motor abilities.

For example, he talked about being robbed twice, once by a sex worker and once through extortion over the internet. He mentioned two occasions when he was sexually assaulted, once by someone he met from Grindr and once by his carer. He also talked about different situations where his speech impediment created difficulties, one where a hookup thought Uddam was affecting it to mock him, and once where he was refused entry into a nightclub. Speaking to people in nightclubs, where loud music is playing also poses problems. The gay scene in general is not nearly as accessible as it should be. He talked specifically about the difficulties he had walking around Soho on the day of London Pride because the small streets are so tightly packed. The smartphone itself is inaccessible to Uddam because he cannot use his fingers in the way that is necessary to operate the touchscreen. He also faced abuse on hookup apps. He said,

“one guy called me a retard on Grindr. He said, "who's going to have sex with you? You're a retard."

Now, the amount of violence that Uddam has faced is shocking and obviously very upsetting. No one else we spoke to. who recounted this level of violence in their pursuit of intimacy. So I'm not presenting it here today as representative of the scale of violence faced by women on the gay scene on or offline. I include it here because Uddam's experience illustrates some of the many forms of violence that gay and or disabled men of colour more generally can be and sometimes are vulnerable to as they negotiate the cultures of intimacy. Now the reason that our participants, including Uddam to some extent, did not face this much violence was because the majority of them found ways of using their smartphones to control and mitigate against violences they felt vulnerable too.

So this brings us to our second theme, control. And again, this splits in two ways. Firstly, the control over when the vulnerability they might want to experience with an intimate partner became a little too much to bear. And secondly, as a way of controlling the possibility of facing the sort of sorts of violence that Uddam had experienced so much of. So the following quote from our interview, Luca, sums up the first part of this theme very concisely. He says, "I see this with my boyfriends, where the topic is really important, but represents something for someone that is vulnerable. They would prefer to reach me on WhatsApp because they are more in control on when to stop and when to post, when they have more time to think about their words." Many other participants concurred talking about using the various features of their phones, the camera, different hook-up and social media applications, SMS, voice notes, etc., to get a feeling of control over the various ways this sort of vulnerability pervaded this part of their intimate lives.

Abedisi told an amusing anecdote in his interview, which illustrates the broad contours of this. he says

"I went to the National Portrait Gallery with my boyfriend and we played a game where it was like 'oh I bet I could pick you up if I'd just come up to you in the portrait gallery' even knowing that it was a game and that that was my boyfriend when he was like 'oh do you come here often?' I was immediately like 'please don't talk to me please leave me alone I'm just here to see the art' immediately like shutting down the conversation."

And then we asked if you were to change that into an online setting, does that feel different from that experience in an offline setting? And Abedisi says,

"you can just ignore the message, or you can block them if it gets to that. But actually, they can't be in your space in that sort of way. Like, just because there's a message in your inbox doesn't mean you have to acknowledge it. You know, in the way that, like, if someone were to come up to me and speak to me, I can't pretend as though I didn't hear them or see them. Like, we both know that, in fact, I've heard what they've said. I've seen them come up to me and so it's sort of like how do I extricate myself from this situation in a way that allows me to continue enjoying my time or prevent like a scene, you know?"

So I'm again including this anecdote not because it's representative or because we found it quite funny but because it offers a vivid illustration of the control of the smartphone is believed to afford in the realm of intimacy. We read this quote as saying that Abedisi feels so unbearably vulnerable even in role -playing with a potential new intimate who happens to be role -played by his boyfriend, that he immediately shuts down the flirtation. However, reimagined in an online setting, that vulnerability becomes far more manageable because he can just ignore or block another user's mediated advances. The digital in this context is a technology for managing or controlling the unbearability of intimacy's vulnerabilities. Now there were other ways the smartphone was used in this way.

Some talked about controlling the pace of their intimate encounters. Will liked to be able to decide when to send the men that he met on Grindr his phone number so the relationship could in his terms 'graduate' to WhatsApp. Some talked about controlling their image. So Joe uses a wheelchair and talked about wanting to have control over when he reveals this part of his life. So it does not include a picture where his wheelchair is visible on his hook up app profiles, but then decides to send one if he feels he trusts the person. Gareth relished being able to use the chat functions of different social media apps to establish the boundaries of the BDSM encounters that he enjoyed organizing. And finally, there were ways that our participants spoke of using the different affordances of their smartphones to gain a sense of control over the violence they faced in their pursuit of intimacy.

So this is Uddam on the digital techniques that he uses to protect against the possibility of being catfished. He says,

"I'll make sure that his name is a real person. So I usually copy his name and I usually check it on Facebook. Check if somebody's called that. Check if it's him or not. I usually type a person on Google to check if that's the right person or not. because there are so many fake people out there."

And this is Alex talking about using the block function of hookup apps to gain a sense of control over transphobia.

"Sometimes something that trans folk have to deal with that I have to deal with are people who are out there specifically looking for trans folk, like cis people. I will get messages from people thousands of kilometres away who are literally like, 'I want a boy pussy,' and I'm like, block."

Abedisi specifically articulated that if he had to experience racism at all his preference that it happened online though of course this is hardly a choice that anyone should have to make, he says

"it's a lot easier to brush off stuff that happens online because you just exit and then it's gone."

So I don't want to imply that what we've taken from this is that digital technologies are the solution to vanquishing racism or indeed any other form of abuse or violence. Just to note here that when our participants did speak about their phones in relation to violence, not only did they talk about the ways it made them vulnerable to different forms of violence, they simultaneously spoke about the sense of control it gave them over this violence, that this type of network media could expose them to. Now, before I start talking about these findings conjuncturally, I just want to make a couple of points about how they contrast with the existing research on, and popular perceptions of queer men's cultures of intimacy.

So the first relates to how intimacy is defined within academic scholarship. Ken Plummer defines intimacy as 'innermost thoughts and feelings.' Lynn Jamieson as 'relationships which are often described as the most important to people.' Lauren Berlant defined intimacy as 'connections that people depend on for living.' And Shackha Maglotten as 'the affective encounters with others that often matter most.' Now, the term vulnerability does occasionally appear in this scholarship, but mostly as a secondary term. Two of the most prominent writers to think about intimacy and vulnerability together are Anne Chectovich and Catherine Angel, both of whom write about women in intimacy. It's rare that the two terms come together in work on queer men, and yet it was the most common way that our participants defined intimacy. This leads on to the second point. The primary association made by our participants between intimacy and vulnerability and their use of smartphones to gain a sense of control over this flat out contradicts the pervasive popular stereotype of queer men's cultures of sex and intimacy.

This stereotype has it that out of control queer men's, sorry, out of control, queer men's use of hookup apps to ferociously accumulate as many meaningless casual sex encounters as possible, often with damaging consequences for their mental health. There is little room for terms like vulnerability and control, at least in the ways that we're using them, within this conception of queer men's cultures of sex and intimacy. Now, of course, this may be the case for some queer men, but our findings show precisely the opposite that, again, being vulnerable with another person was critical to their understanding of their intimate life, whichever type of intimacy they desired. And they used different aspects of their smartphones to make them feel like they are more in control as they negotiate these cultures. Now, the key question for us, given the approach that we've taken, is why has this way of defining intimacy and if using smartphones emerged in this way now, okay? What can this type of media use tell us about queer men's lives and the conjuncture that we all inhabit?

Now, to answer these questions, I'm going to put what our interviewees said into conversation with some queer theory. It's about to get a bit theoretical. I apologize for that. And some contemporary conjunctural analysis. Now, interestingly, vulnerability and control are key terms across both sets of literature, although vulnerability comes out more through the concept of sovereignty, or to be precise, non-sovereignty. So in simple terms, the term sovereignty means a state of having power or authority over something. In the queer theory literature on intimacy, the term non-sovereignty, is used to refer to the fact that we never have full power or authority over our subjectivities, right? Or our sense of self. Because we are constituted through our relationships to the people and objects that we desire intimacy with. We believe that achieving intimacy with others will help us master this unsettling and sometimes unbearable experience of non-sovereignty and make us feel complete.

This is, however, a fantasy, what some queer theorists call the fantasy of sovereignty. The romantic discourse of idealized marriage is a fantasy of sovereignty, as is the 1960s idea of sexual liberation. These discourses offer us a sense that our intimate practices can in different ways fulfill us and make us feel whole. Many queer theorists, especially those who theorize queer men's sexual cultures, people like Leo Bosani and Lee Edelman, think this fantasy of sovereignty is to put it very crudely bad, precisely because it's a fantasy. Intimate relations can never make us feel complete. We are fundamentally non-sovereign. For these scholars, accepting and inhabiting our non-sovereignty as fully as we can is the ideal ethical position. Non-sovereignty explicitly becomes vulnerability in the work of Anne Chektevich, who in her essay on Butch Femme Lesbian Intimacies, so in an essay on Butch Femme lesbian intimacies, and also in Catherine Angel's recent book, 'Tomorrow's Sex Will Be Good Again,' which is about heterosexual women.

So they think about non-sovereignty as sorts of vulnerability. As Angel writes, "in sex, we are all quintessentially vulnerable." And for Chetkovich, "the experience of being vulnerable is both welcome and difficult and therefore profoundly transformative." So the notion of control that was so prevalent amongst our participants is completely at odds with how vulnerability and non-sovereignty is being theorised here. It is a fantasy of sovereignty that you can exercise control in your intimate life in any meaningful way. These writers, one imagined, would caution against our participants using their smartphones to gain a sense of control over the parts of their intimate lives where they feel most vulnerable.

Indeed, Scholar of Digital Media, Kane Race does this very thing in reflections on gay men's for cup app use, which he argues furnishes users with the promise of control over their erotic engagements. He ends these reflections expressing concern that this promise of of control forecloses the possibility of more diverse, more experimental, and more transformative cultures of intimacy. Now, before I reflect on the ethics of vulnerability and control any further, I want to move the discussion to a more conjunctural register. And, as I said before, ask, why are queer men defining intimacy in terms of vulnerability and using their smartphones to get a sense of control over this vulnerability now? What is it about the present historical conjuncture that would produce this particular formation of smartphone mediated intimacy?

So in political theorist, Paulo Gerbaudo's recently published book, he argues that the discursive horizon of the present conjuncture is defined by the triad of sovereignty, control, and protection, what he calls the master signifiers of our era. our culture's preoccupation with for our purposes sovereignty and control has emerged according to Gerbaudo and many others as a result of the multiple conjunctural crises we've been experiencing for over a decade so just to say we interviewed our participants in 2020 and 2021 so these crises have come about largely due to the unraveling of neoliberalism that started in 2008 with the financial crisis but intensified after the global rise of populism as what Paolo Gerbaudo calls the negation of neoliberalism, which manifested itself in the UK through the Brexit vote. Since its inception, the neoliberal project has always had popular sovereignty in its sides, seeking to replace the control that democratically accountable public institutions give us with privatised free markets. It is precisely neo-liberalism's deepening of non -sovereignty that has led to the desire for more sovereignty, which has found its most visible expression in the Leave Campaign's conjuncture-defining slogan, Take Back Control.

Other writers point to the economic precarity experienced by so many of us under neoliberalism, especially after the crash and the austerity measures which were introduced in response. The philosopher, Judith Butler, has defined precarity as the un-eastern, equal distribution of vulnerability. Our collective sense of unequally distributed vulnerability only intensified during the coronavirus conjuncture, especially for those designated as belonging to vulnerable groups, in which there were, sorry, mostly unsuccessful attempts to, in the words of another epoch-defining political slogan, control the virus.

So, from our perspective, the appearance of vulnerability and control in our project is not just evidence of how intimacy works. It also points to the conjunctural intensification of non -sovereignty that has come in the wake of neoliberalism's unraveling. How much more vulnerable it has made us feel and the sense of control that so many of us desire as a result. The queer men we spoke to inhabit this conjuncture as much as anyone else. else and that this structure of feeling should pervade their experiences of intimacy makes sense from the perspective of conjunctural analysis, with its understanding of all domains of a social formation over-determining each other in complex and unpredictable ways. There are, however, specific ways that queer men and other queer communities have been made to feel more vulnerable in the current conjuncture.

Much has been made in recent cultural analysis of how white, white, cis, able-bodied, educationally and economically privileged gay men have benefited from the neoliberal settlement and its attendant politics of what's called homo-normativity. Now, in the book we don't dispute this, but our research shows a more complex picture for even these men, let alone queer men with less capital, the trans men we spoke to, queer men of colour and queer men living with disabilities. For instance, a neoliberal economy geared towards proper despeculation, combined with austerity measures and with the pandemic restrictions, have led to the reduction and closure of spaces that different queer communities have historically relied on to feel safe, indeed less vulnerable. Bars, nightclubs, other community spaces and sexual health services. A key feature of our crisis -ridden conjuncture has been the so-called cultural wars, which have been defined by sustained and highly visible attacks on, trans folk and people of colour who are engaged in various political struggles to make their lives more livable. The recent emergence of the black trans lives matter movement being exemplary of both. The media debate over trans bodily sovereignty, in fact that the very fact of trans existence is central to these attacks. This has had on and offline dimensions, with persistent trolling of trans folk and people of colour across a range of online platforms, including from queer men on hook up apps. Our participants spoke in unexpected ways about navigating this particular terrain.

So both our participants of colour and our trans participants spoke of the ambivalence that they felt when people connected with them on hookahaps to perform allyship, preferring to be left of the cruising they'd gone on the app to do. Here we see the conjunctural shaping the intimate in a very immediate and direct way. There has also been related rises in reports of violence against all categories of the LGBTQ plus spectrum, including white cis gay men and women. Homophobia has not been exhausted as a social force, despite the political gains made in the name of cis gay men and women. In short, queer life in all its intersections has become yet more vulnerable in the current conjuncture, and given this, it is no surprise that women are using aspects of their own intersections. smartphones in an attempt to gain a sense of control over the point where this vulnerability feels like too much to bear. Okay, so I'd like to conclude the presentation in two ways. First, I'd like to reflect a little bit on the ethics of vulnerability and control in this context of queer men's smartphone mediated intimacies.

Then I'd like to conclude by making the case for the value of bringing conjunctural analysis together with research on digital intimacies. So in terms of the ethics of non-sovereignty, in some sense, the approach that we're taking isn't necessarily about intervening into this academic debate on whether or not women should use digital media as a means to strive for sovereignty in their intimate lives. The point of the project and the book has been to map the historical conditions in which the desire for sovereignty has intensified across different parts of society. Having said this, despite the compelling case that some queer thinkers have made for not only accepting, but also by being transformed by our non-sovereignty, we cannot help but feel sympathetic to our participant's desire for control within these historical conditions.

In a time of multiple and continuing political crises when so much feels out of control, there is a logic in trying to exercise more, sorry, in trying to exercise more control in one of the few areas left where you think you can, even if it's an unrealizable fantasy. It's also worth reflecting on the fact that queer theorists in these debates do not make the distinction between the two different forms of non-sovereignty or vulnerability that our participants talked about. The sort of control that, sorry, that sort of control that queer theorists caution against is clearly different to the desire for control over the vulnerability to violence you might be exposed to in your search for intimacy, racist, transphobic, homophobic or otherwise. So with certain these scholars wouldn't disagree, it's just this distinction is not often explicitly made on the literature on these questions.

Finally, on using conjuncture to research digital intimacies. In the context of research on digital intimacies, we have found that conjunctural analysis has served a double function. We would argue that it has enriched our understandings of intimacy. These intimacies do not take place in a vacuum. Mapping the arrangement of the conjuncture in which they take place gives us a more precise sense of what these intimacies look like as well as what the historical significance is. Conversely, research into cultures of intimacy, what forms they take, how they are struggled over and fall, and how they intersect with other societal domains, deepens our understanding of how a social formation is arranged during a particular conjuncture.

So there's been a recent revival of interest in conjunctural analysis over the past few years, with research monographs using the method and special issues of journals dedicated to it. All of these use capital pre-politics as their way into understanding what different conjunctures, which, if nothing else, is contrary to the spirit of the origins of the methodology at the CCS. I would argue that intimacy should be added to the practice of conjunctural analysis. It has shown us two things. The types and textures of queer male relationships that have been potentiated and constrained by current historical arrangements, and it's also given us access to what it feels like to inhabit these arrangements and the desires that emerge in these responses.

How ordinary people feel and what they desire in their everyday lives is critical to understand if we want to persuade them to consent to more progressive political projects. And finally, I would like to contribute to the case others are making within cultural studies for the revival of this as a method. Some cultural studies professors go to conferences and argue you're not doing cultural studies if you're not doing cultural analysis. And I don't believe this. But I do believe in the value of collective analyzing cultural formations in an endeavor to better understand what it feels like to live in such fraught, anxious and crisis-ridden times so we can work together to bring about less vulnerable futures. Thank you.