

Conference Call for Papers
'Do No Harm': Researching the Pasts, Presents, and Futures of Sexual Violence

Birkbeck, University of London
8-10th February 2023

In the last twenty years, we have witnessed protests and acts of resistance against sexual violence in its many forms around the world. #MeToo is only the latest articulation of anger against a contested and highly politicised form of violence that continues to be an omnipresent threat to women and children. While substantial legal and social gains have been made in some parts of the world over the past five decades, the violence continues. Harmful rape myths and stereotypes, often racialized, endure and shape who society sees as victims and perpetrators. The legal, medical, and criminal justice systems repeatedly fail victims and survivors. Violence prevention programmes continually place the onus on women and children to monitor their own behaviour. Those whose identities are marginalised or 'othered' such as trans and non-binary people, immigrants, or people with disabilities are targeted for abuse and often failed by services set up to support them.

This conference explores sexual violence from a historical perspective. What can historical research reveal about sexual violence in both the past and present, and how can such research help us to think constructively about the future? How can researchers overcome the significant methodological challenges inherent in such scholarship? How can academics, activists, and practitioners work together in these endeavours? We invite papers from academics in any discipline, as well as from activists and practitioners working in the gender-based violence sector. Papers can focus on any historical period or location, and we particularly welcome papers exploring histories of sexual violence beyond Europe and the Global North. Papers may focus on methodology, ethics, or research findings, but should emphasise how their approach or argument develops current understandings of sexual violence in new ways

Alongside the presentation of papers, the conference will also bring together academics, activists, and practitioners in workshops which facilitate knowledge exchange between sectors and across disciplines. We welcome submissions for academic papers, workshops, or other, innovative approaches and formats of presenting ideas and sharing knowledge.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Intersectional identities and histories of sexual violence
- Representations of 'victims,' 'survivors' or 'perpetrators'
- Positionality and power dynamics in the research process
- Oral histories and other participatory methodologies
- Working with activists, NGOs, and local communities
- Public engagement and public histories of sexual violence
- Methodological challenges and ethical complexities
- Archival encounters
- Emotions and language
- Voices, silences, and erasure
- Storytelling, memoir, and personal testimonies
- Critiques of legal or medical histories of gender-based violence
- Histories of activism against sexual or gender-based violence

The conference will also form the basis of an edited collection exploring the methodological challenges, ethical dilemmas, and opportunities inherent in researching the histories of sexual violence. Participants will have the option of proposing their papers for inclusion in this publication. We will ask for full papers to be submitted for peer review shortly after the conference.

Please submit abstracts of no more than 300 words to e.j.bridger@exeter.ac.uk and r.beecher@bbk.ac.uk by **13th June 2022**. We aim to notify participants of their acceptance by August 2022. All abstracts should include:

- The names and affiliations of presenters
- An outline of the proposed presentation (300 words max)
- Whether you will need funding for travel and accommodation

This conference is jointly funded by UKRI and the Wellcome Trust, and hosted by the [South Africa's Hidden War](#) project at the University of Exeter and the [Sexual Encounters and Medical Harms](#) (SHaME) project at Birkbeck, University of London.