



## Bringing More Voices to the Table: Community Responses to Our Sexual Harassment Guest Editorial

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When discussions of sexual harassment are on the table, who feels able to pull up a chair? Not everyone feels entitled or able to take up space in academic journals or resist the potential blowback doing so often entails. The list of commentary authors who pulled themselves a chair and the context of their comments on our Guest Editorial (Herbenick et al., 2019) is, on balance, a clear and ironic/unironic representation of major axes of power. On the one hand, feminist theories predict that those experiencing oppression and critically engaging with those experiences will be best positioned to think through that oppression, including who perpetrates it, who maintains it, whom it benefits, what can change it, as well as who resists efforts towards equity. On the other hand, feminist theories also predict that those who benefit from oppression will protect the status quo and resist both challenges to it and attempts towards more equitable distributions of power. So, the pattern of commenters' social locations is not surprising, nor are their comments. Yet, to presume this pattern is reflective of the response to our Guest Editorial would be a grossly partial and

incomplete view. Indeed, the response to our Guest Editorial has been broad and far-reaching.

We appreciate the support from three positive commentaries for the concerns we raised about sexual harassment in sex research (Byers, Mustanski, Semenza, Suschinsky, & Vilain, 2020; Sánchez, 2019; Seto, 2019). This included Byers et al. representing the International Academy of Sex Research (IASR) and, in addition, Sánchez recounting his own experience of racism in academia and Seto calling for empirical research on perpetrators of sexual harassment. These three commentaries in the academic record were not, however, the only supportive feedback our Guest Editorial prompted. The response has been much bigger.

The quantified metrics of the response to our Guest Editorial help to demonstrate its reach. Since it went online only about a year ago, Altmetrics shows that there have been over 12,000 downloads and 587 shares. According to Altmetrics, this puts it in the top 5% of all “outputs” of a similar age that it tracks, #31 of all *Archives of Sexual Behavior* publications (ever), and #1 of all outputs from *Archives of Sexual Behavior* of a similar age. “Altmetric has tracked 14,288,069 research outputs across all sources so far. Compared to these, this one has done particularly well and is in the 99th percentile: it’s in the top 5% of all research outputs ever tracked by Altmetric” (Altmetric, 2020; boldface material removed).

Beyond metrics, we have been heartened and moved by the immense outpouring of support for our Guest Editorial. We have given an invited talk on sexual harassment in sex research, prompted by the Guest Editorial, at the 2019 annual meeting of the Canadian Sex Research Forum (CSRF) in Victoria that itself spurred much positive discussion. We have heard from colleagues in sex research and other disciplines, including at multiple career stages, that our Guest Editorial helped them to consider how to address sexual harassment and even how their own past actions may have been sexual harassment. Colleagues—ones we know and new ones we have met—have included our Guest Editorial in lab meetings, academic society

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meetings, journal club discussions, and curricula. And, our Guest Editorial encouraged even more people to share their personal experiences of sexual harassment in sex research with us; while we are honored to have their trust, we are also heartbroken and further galvanized towards action. Some accounts were particularly difficult to read as they shared stories of persistent sexual harassment and sexual assault at especially vulnerable times of sex researchers' lives and educational/career trajectories. And, it is complex—at times, we heard of the important efforts certain colleagues made to intervene and stop sexual harassment or assault; other times, we heard those same colleagues described as perpetrators of sexual harassment or assault. As a field, we continue to have our work cut out for us; we can and should do better.

One of the gifts of feminist and queer approaches to scholarship is that they challenge dominant modes of knowledge and dissemination that sequester and limit authority. In other words, we as scholars do not have to wait for people to pull up a chair to one specific table when they are sharing experiences in other places. We can listen to what people—our colleagues—are saying where they are saying it. The majority of the following comments came to us through Twitter (except where noted otherwise), and we are thankful for them, and the opportunity to amplify them here.

*This is amazing. Thank you so much to the sex researchers who wrote this editorial.*

-@MimiArbeit, Miriam R. Arbeit, PhD, Suffolk University.

*As a veteran sex researcher this is long overdue. Predators found an easy hide-out in sex research because you can say and do all sorts of things while suggesting those that object aren't good at science, are prudish, or not 'sex positive'. See also racism in this field.*

-@drpetra, Petra Boynton, The Research Companion.

*Unfortunately, this is way too common. I can't even count how many times I've been sexually harassed. TY for offering valuable recommendations to stop it @DebbyHerbenick @SarivanAnders @DrLoriBrotto @SexProfSofia @jayleen\_galarza Dr. Chivers @QSageLab*

-@sextherapyhawaii, Dr. Janet Brito, Center for Sexual and Reproductive Health, Honolulu, Hawaii.

*Help stop sexual harassment in the field of sexuality research. Thank you*

*@DebbyHerbenick @SexProfSofia @SarivanAnders @jayleen\_galarza @DrLoriBrotto @DrMLChivers for writing this important editorial. #metoo #metooexscience*

-@DrAllieCarter, Dr. Allie Carter, PhD, UNSW Sydney & Simon Fraser University.

*If you haven't yet, you should read the sexual harassment in sex research editorial that was published in the Archives of Sexual Behavior recently! This harassment is so real and it's time for a reckoning!*

And

*Thank you for making those of us who have experienced sexual harassment feel SO incredibly heard!*

*@DebbyHerbenick @SarivanAnders @DrLoriBrotto @DrMLChivers @SexProfSofia @jayleen\_galarza -@SaraBChadwick, Sara B. Chadwick, PhD Candidate, University of Michigan.*

*An incredibly important read for those of us in sexuality research, education, and therapy.*

-@currieous, Lisa Currie, MEd, MEd, University of Wisconsin.

*Thank you @SarivanAnders @DrLoriBrotto @DebbyHerbenick @SexProfSofia @JayleenGalarza @DrMLChivers for stepping up, stepping forward and starting an important conversation. This dialogue will shed light on our abilities, goodwill and social justice.*

-@carmmenting, Carm De Santis.

*I didn't realize how much I was hungering for SOMEONE to break the silence on this issue until the five of you bravely did. And what you produced went beyond everything I could have hoped for. It is comprehensive, challenging, uncompromising, straightforward, and brimming with the crackling insight and authority that comes from first-hand experience. You have started a conversation that cannot be ignored ... What I really appreciate about the article is the onus that it places on senior scholars to do some heavy lifting in terms of questioning our own behavior ... and thinking about how we can CHANGE the culture we are a part of ... As we all move forward with the consequences of this painful and necessary conversation, I'm happy to join with any efforts in further publicizing this topic, organizing meetings at conferences, etc. My heart is bursting with gratitude, not really for myself (since I have thankfully been spared these experiences, personally) but for my students and colleagues, and hence the whole damn future of our field.*

-Lisa Diamond, Professor of Psychology and Gender Studies, University of Utah (via email).

*I'm a #sexed #phd researcher but have similar experiences when I tell people what I study. I want to know how you learned about sex, not how you like to do it!*

-@esdobson11, Emma Dobson, PhD, Durham University.

*Excellent editorial – much needed – thank you for writing it.*

-@briandavidearp, Brian D. Earp, Departments of Philosophy and Psychology, Yale University.

*I've admired these scientists for their research for a long time. Now I admire them for their courage to write this really important piece. Great and timely read. "Our professional sexuality spaces are about our work, not our personal sexualities"*

-@ExtenCara, Cara Exten (Rice), PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor of Nursing, Penn State University.

*Re the last couple of tweets, everyone working in sexuality research (and I would argue sex ed as well) needs to read this editorial.*

-@karynfulcher, Karyn Fulcher, PhD, University of Victoria.

*Mustread editorial by rockstars in field @DebbyHerbenick @SarivanAnders @DrLoriBrotto @SexProfSofia @jayleen\_galarza*

-@PazGalupo, M. Paz Galupo, PhD, Towson University.

*Provocative & inclusive editorial on sexual harassment in the field of sexuality research. Kudos!*

-@LGBTQ\_Research, Jennifer Goldberg and the Re:searching for LGBTQ2S+ Health Group.

*I stand with everything written in this very important piece, and I'm going to commit to doing more and saying more when I see harassment in our field. Even prouder that this is being said loudly by some @\_CSRF members.*

-@jhuberMD, Jonathan D. Huber, MD, MSc, FRCSC.

*Important editorial on sexual harassment within the field of sexuality research. People sometimes think that if a person studies sex, that means they are personally more sexually receptive or that it is more okay to ask them explicit questions. Nope.*

-@datingdecisions, Samantha Joel, PhD, Western University.

*It's awesome. And important.*

-@ben\_c\_j, Ben C. Jones.

*Every scholar, teacher, and/or sexuality researcher/career-person needs to read this now. What, it's 11 pm on a Friday night? I don't care, read it now.*

-Dr. Jeana Jorgensen, Lecturer, Butler University.

*So here for this editorial. \*3 clapping hands emojis\* The amount of sexual harassment, hypersexualization and desexualization I have experienced as both a sex educator and sexuality researcher is staggering...and I am both White and cis. Sure it is higher for WOC/trans folks.*

-@DShannaK, Shanna K Kattari, PhD MEd CSE, University of Michigan.

*Thank you for using your social positions and power to open the floor to those with less of a platform to address their concerns. Your work, courage, and voices are so so much appreciated.*

-@ChelseaKilimnik, Chelsea D. Kilimnik, MS, Doctoral Candidate, The University of Texas at Austin.

*The editorial "Sexual Harassment in the Field of Sexuality Research" lays important groundwork: an inclusive definition of harassment, outlining experiences and their consequences, and beginning the conversation on short and long term strategies <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10508-019-1405-x...> #MeTooCAA*

-@kiddiecobl, Clare L. Kovacs, PhD.

*great piece and great first steps from our friends in sexuality research! relationship research as a whole would benefit from this exercise as well @IARROfficial #TimesUp #MeToo*

-@v\_lamarche, Veronica Lamarche, PhD, University of Essex.

*Probably one of the most important articles ever! Thanks to Sari van Anders, Debby Herbenick, Meredith Chivers and their co-authors – you're making a difference!*

-Lotta Löfgren-Mårtenson, PhD, Malmö University (via Facebook).

*I'm grateful for these strong leaders in our field for calling out what needs to be changed. I hope there is more acknowledgment of the role of power in the sexual outcomes of folks in our studies as well as those who study them. #MeTooMvmt #MeToo #TimesUp #TimesUpSexScience*

-@MeganKMaas, Megan Maas, PhD, Michigan State University.

*"Working in sexuality professions does require some sexual openness and comfort, but can implicitly inhere an expectation of sexual expression. But our professional sexuality spaces are about our work, not our personal sexualities." Just a taste of this great & important read \*hand praising emoji\**

-@\_karmacap, Kathryn Macapagal, PhD, Northwestern University.

*Scathing indictment of sexual harassment in academia. Grateful for brave people who speak truth to power.*

-@magsmacaulay, Margaret MacAulay, PhD, University of British Columbia.

*Thank you all for taking this on...it is a much needed discussion #TimesUp #MeToo #SexScience.*

-@Kristen\_Mark, Kristen Mark, PhD, MPH, University of Kentucky.

*Very important commentary that sheds light on the egregious behaviors that need to be stopped. It will take all of us to do this. The first step is honest and open conversation. Thanks @DebbyHerbenick*

-@beth\_meyerson, Beth Meyerson, MDiv., PhD, Research Professor, Southwest Institute for Research on Women, College of Social & Behavioral Sciences, Family & Community Medicine, College of Medicine, University of Arizona.

*Thank you for this important piece. One thing (of many) that I appreciated was leading with this step toward change “the first step is obvious: sexual harassers need to stop harassing” #TimesUp*

-@AmyMuise, Amy Muise, Ph.D, York University.

*A must read! \*3 hands pointing down emojis\**

-@KMNelsonPhD, Kimberly M. Nelson, PhD, MPH, Boston University School of Public Health.

*Time to speak up!*

-@saoirseNG, Saoirse Nic Gabhainn.

*Everyone in academia should read this. Sexual harassment in the academy happens in all disciplines, at all universities. Graduate students have been left behind in the fight against sexual harassment-and that has to change. #MeTooPhD*

-@erepear13, Erin O’Callaghan, MA, Doctoral student, University of Illinois-Chicago.

*Good work.*

-@AmeliaNgozi, Amelia Ngozi Odo, PhD, University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Michigan State University, USA.

*Sexual harassment doesn’t have to be sexual to be harassment. It involves any form of gender-based derogating or mistreatment. More facts here \*emoji*

*finger pointing down\* And more here #sexualharassment #academiclife*

-@ljuba\_pi, Liuba Papeo, CNRS, Institut des Sciences Cognitives.

*Very important read: Sexual Harassment in the Field of Sexuality Research.*

-@DrMParada, Mayte Parada, PhD, Psychotherapist.

*For women doing the work of sexuality research to be also harassed tells us there are no safe spaces. This needs to be addressed in every professional sphere. #rapeculture #smashthepatriarchy*

-@sexassaultaware, Andrew Pari, LCSW, Diplomate, Executive Director, Sexual Assault Awareness LLC.

*Interviewing men about sex has lead to getting asked out, hit on, creepy comments made about me by former interviewees to people I know, assumptions about promiscuity, etc. #timesup*

-@sociologistP, Ariane Prohaska, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Alabama.

*I hate that we need this editorial, but we deeply need this editorial. Thanks to these brave women sex researchers I admire very much.*

-@chelseajulian, Chelsea Reynolds, Assistant Professor of Communications, California State University – Fullerton.

*This is clearly a necessary contribution to the field. Keep clicking people!*

And

*I’m loving the grounding in how we define sexual harassment and the intersections. Thank you.*

-@YaelRosenstock, Yael R. Rosenstock Gonzalez, Author of An Intro-Guide to a Sex Positive You: Lessons, Tales, and Tips, Founder, Kaleidoscope Vibrations, LLC.

*Thank you so much for doing this important work, @DebbyHerbenick and colleagues!*

-@JNRutherford, Julienne Rutherford, PhD, Associate Professor and Associate Head, Department of Women, Children, and Family Health Science, College of Nursing, University of Illinois at Chicago.

*Brilliant read, start-to-finish—particularly amazing at dismantling some of the more stubborn, common, and specious count-arguments. Eager to discuss, listen, share, and reflect on with my sex research fam.*

-@JohnSakaluk, John K. Sakaluk, PhD, University of Victoria.

*A powerful statement on sexual harassment in the field of sexuality research.*

-@psychoschmitt, David P. Schmitt, Director of the Centre for Culture and Evolution, Brunel University London.

*Courageous and necessary editorial from leading sex researchers. Grateful for their voices. #TimesUpSexScience #TimesUp #MeToo.*

-@MCSeto, Michael Seto, PhD, University of Ottawa.

*I just finished reading this fantastic editorial and I don't know how I'm going to sleep now because I'm so fired up for change!! \*three clapping hand emoji\**

And

*This was SUCH a needed and well written piece, thank you all!*

-@shaynagram, Shayna Skakoon-Sparling, PhD, Ryerson University

*I'm really grateful for this editorial from @DebbyHerbenick, @SarivanAnders, @DrLoriBrotto, @DrMLChivers, @SexProfSofia, & @jayleen\_galarza & hopeful it will bring positive action. I've seen & experienced this harassment in sex research. It has to stop.*

-@LiadhT, Liadh Timmins, PhD, Columbia University. An excellent article, thank you.

- @ProfGrahamTowl, Professor Graham Towl, formerly Pro Vice Chancellor, Chair of the Sexual Violence Task Force at Durham University, UK

*How "sex" in sex research can contribute to a culture of sexual harassment. An excellent (open access) editorial by several of the world's leading female sex scientists.*

-@DrZhana, Zhana Vrangalova, PhD, New York University.

*bravo bravo bravo to @DebbyHerbenick, @SarivanAnders, @DrLoriBrotto @DrMLChivers,*

*@SexProfSofia and Jayleen Galarza, every academic everywhere: read this. And then read it again. And again and again. #ECRchat #twitterstorians #histsex #metoo.*

-@brimwats, Brian M. Watson, MLIS Indiana University Bloomington / MA Drew University.

*Thank you all for writing this and moving this forward, it is incredible work.*

-@jessrwood1, Jessica Wood, PhD.

*And don't miss this recent editorial on sexual harassment in sex research either!*

-@Jacylyoung, Jacy L. Young, Quest University.

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