

Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies invites abstract submissions for a special issue scheduled for publication in December 2026.

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Furthering Inclusivity in Sex Work Research

In this special issue, inclusivity takes on different meanings regarding sex work research. First, we explore inclusive methodologies that are geared to including sex workers as partners or active participants in the research process. However, our exploration extends beyond this. We are also interested in exploring different approaches and understanding of inclusivity in sex work research. What are the ingredients needed for research to achieve these objectives? Can this only be achieved using collaborative or co-creative research methods, or are there other types of research, research questions and knowledge and methodologies needed to reach this aim? Finally, we also want to stimulate dialogue concerning who - which actors and groups - are included or excluded in sex work research, and what is required to further the inclusion of different actors and their positionalities in sex work. The special issue aims to present the many ways research can be inclusive and stimulate dialogue needed to produce different types of knowledge to increase epistemic justice and support sex workers' rights. By doing so, this special issue is concerned with, as the title suggests, furthering inclusivity. Thus, it approaches inclusivity from three points of departure, the first regarding making research more inclusive through inclusive methodologies, the second making research more inclusive through including different types of knowledges, and finally furthering inclusivity through making visible or including groups which have been underrepresented in sex work research. Hence defining inclusivity across these three different dimensions, is an essential step for using research to contribute to increasing epistemic justice for all individuals involved in sex work.

In the last decade, there has been growing recognition in social sciences in general and sex work research in particular of the need to create and employ research methods based on collaboration, engagement, and co-creation. Underlying this development are several epistemological principles that acknowledge the research subject as a knowledge subject and aim to do away with extractive research methods to be replaced with methodologies that contribute to epistemic justice. That is to say, research becomes a means for marginalized groups to be heard, with their knowledge guiding the research process and knowledge production. Moreover, it potentially assures that the research conducted will positively impact the situation of sex workers. These inclusive methodologies, be that collaborative research, participatory action research, or community-led research – to name a few- go hand in hand with a multitude of participatory methods. These methods support

and accentuate the production of knowledge from the perspective of the research subject and create spaces of reflexive dialogue between the researcher and the knowledge subject. The researcher is not the sole knower but shares this position with the group involved in the research.

Sex work activists and sex work-led organizations have long called for policymakers, politicians and researchers to adhere to the sex work movement's slogan "nothing for us without us". This slogan developed out of sex workers' dissatisfaction with continually feeling the consequences of laws and policies, for example, that were imposed on them and their realities often producing more harm than protection and simultaneously reinforcing moral stereotypes that contribute to their stigmatization. While the same tendency can be found in sex work research, with many examples of studies that reinforce the moral position of the researcher rather than reflect the realities of the sex worker, for a growing group of researchers, this slogan "nothing for us without us" underlies the inclusive methodologies they choose for their research. Consequently, many researchers consider sex workers' participation and/or the co-creation of the research project to be the most ethical way to do research and essential for the research to be a success. Surprisingly, what this inclusion means in the day-to-day doings of research is underexposed.

This special issue offers the opportunity for contributors to explore the limitations and potentialities, the successful and less successful outcomes, of research grounded in inclusive methodologies and explore the various approaches to inclusivity in sex work. This critical analysis of inclusive methodologies in sex work studies is aimed at breaking open the taken-for-granted significance of this slogan, not as a means to invalidate its significance but rather to bring the discussion further in the ways that research can contribute to support sex workers' rights and increase epistemic justice. While the issue focuses in its entirely on sex work research, we are certain that the subjects foregrounded in this issue are relevant for a broader group of critical scholars who aim to produce research that is not extractive and, in some ways, makes a difference for the people their research involves.

For this issue, we are interested in submissions that critically reflect on empirical research practices of inclusive methodologies, i.e. relational dynamics, the challenges of co-creation, the significance time and/or money plays in participation. In addition, the issue is open to theoretical contributions and dialogues that reflexively question the epistemological and ethical position of the research in relation to the ideas of inclusivity discussed above. We appreciate contributions from different disciplines as well as geographical locations, going beyond Europe and including the Global South. Guiding questions for reflection can be:

1. What does inclusion mean?
2. Are inclusive methodologies the sole way to conduct research that supports sex worker rights and contributes to epistemic justice? Can research that relies less on the sex worker as a knowledge subject also contribute to decreasing their exclusion in broader society?
3. How can we challenge the traditional imagery of sex work and make it more inclusive?
4. The main focus in research on sex work has been on cis gender women as sex workers, but how to include forgotten groups who do not always identify as sex workers (such as migrants or students) or who do not identify as cisgender women (such as men and trans and non-binary people)?

5. What about other groups that tend to be forgotten in sex work research, such as clients or families of sex workers?
6. How does this limited imagery of sex work affect the discourse on sex work and sex work policies?

A reflection on these questions contributes to making visible the epistemological and ethical ways research can be done on sex work that do not necessarily rely (heavily) on inclusive methodologies but nonetheless produce knowledge needed to further the inclusion of sex workers and their clients in society.

Preparing your submission

We welcome two types of submissions: articles and essays. Both may take a scholarly or nontraditional form, and be theoretical, commentary, empirical, poetic and/or artistic. Full-length articles contain a maximum of 6500 words, and essays 3500 words (both incl. bibliography).

Please submit an abstract of 500 words for research papers or 200 words for essays by the 23 of January 2026. Abstracts (and manuscripts) can be written in English and Dutch, and may be empirically situated in any national context. Note that the initial acceptance of the abstract does not guarantee publications as that the manuscripts will undergo a double-blinded review process. All accepted contributions will be published open access.

Please email your abstract proposal as a Word file to all the guest editors:

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