



Birkbeck
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



wellcome

SEXUAL HARMS + MEDICAL ENCOUNTERS RESEARCH HUB

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, CLASSICS AND
ARCHAEOLOGY
BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

SEXUAL HARMS + MEDICAL ENCOUNTERS

About Us

Sexual Harms and Medical Encounters (SHaME) is a research project exploring the role of medicine and psychiatry in sexual violence. We aim to move beyond shame to address this global health crisis. The project is funded by the Wellcome Trust and led by historian Joanna Bourke.

Our Research

Sexual violence is one of the most serious problems in the contemporary world. Our interdisciplinary project seeks to understand the role played by medical professionals, including psychiatrists, in understanding and dealing with sexual harms.

Instead of shame, we advocate for empowerment and knowledge.

Our Researchers

SHaME brings together an interdisciplinary team of researchers working across the humanities, arts, and social sciences to explore the dialogues between medical professionals and people who have experienced sexual violence. Each project within our research hub feeds into collaborative debates around the role of police doctors/FMEs, medicine and law, psychiatry, and the aftermaths of sexual harms.

Joanna Bourke

Professor Joanna Bourke is the Principal Investigator for SHaME. Her research looks at how sexually violent practices and ideologies have varied over time and geographical region. Joanna's research has two parts. The first is a history of the medical and psychiatric aspects of sexual violence in the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand between the first decade of the nineteenth century and the present. The second is the first truly global history of sexual violence, with attention specifically paid to the medical and psychiatric aspects of this form of harm.

Ruth Beecher

Through archival research, Dr Ruth Beecher examines primary care medical responses to intrafamilial child sexual abuse within the wider social and cultural context, as opposed to the treatment they are more often given which is legalistic and procedural. She is also gathering new primary sources through oral histories with retired and current practitioners. Ruth's research will bring a historical perspective to a problem that is often seen only in a particular cultural moment. It includes a comparative analysis between the US and the UK.

Stephanie Wright

Dr Stephanie Wright explores the role of forensic doctors and psychiatrists in sexual violence court cases in Spain under the Francoist dictatorship. The project constitutes a historical study of the legal term 'dishonest abuses,' which referred to a broad spectrum of criminalised sexual acts from rape and child abuse to homosexuality. Drawing on court records, medical textbooks and feminist publications, the project will elucidate the hierarchies between scientific and testimonial evidence within Spanish rape cases under Francoism.

Adeline Moussion

Adeline Moussion is an anthropologist conducting ethnographies of two organizations – a medical care centre and a social work institution – that provide care for victims of violence in Parisian suburbs. She focusses on female victims of male violence as well as on the socio-medical professionals supporting them. Through an interrogation of different forms of violence (sexual, physical, verbal, economic, and administrative), she asks how subjective violation is constructed and what socio-political role the trauma-rhetoric plays in explanations of violence.

Emma Yapp

Emma Yapp's project investigates how psychiatric evidence about complainants of sexual violence is used in court proceedings in England and Wales. Historically, complainants of sexual violence have faced evidence that is intended to undermine their credibility. Currently, England and Wales lack clear governing principles for when and how psychiatric evidence should be deemed relevant to complainants' credibility. Research is therefore required to examine the legal doctrine, current practice, and professional and survivor perspectives on this topic.

Louise Hide

Dr Louise Hide is an Affiliated Senior Fellow with SHaME. Her 'Cultures of Harm' project analyses the abuse inquiries that took place in England during the 1970s. Louise's main focus is on the Whittingham Hospital in Lancashire and South Ockendon Hospital in East London, both of which concern people who were in need of long-term care, particularly older people and those with intellectual disabilities.

Caitlin Cunningham

PhD Candidate Caitlin Cunningham is an Affiliated Fellow with SHaME. Her research delves into the overlapping and complex ways that identity markers, stage of life, and behaviour influenced definitions of and responses to sexual violence in late-nineteenth-century California.

Our core research team is joined by Rhea Sookdeosingh, Public Engagement and Events Coordinator, and James Gray, a critically acclaimed documentary filmmaker.

Each year, we will also host visiting fellows from around the world working in areas related to our research themes.

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Please visit our website for more information about our research. We host a Resources page where you will find open access publications and other data sources related to sexual violence, medicine and psychiatry. We also publish a Blog where our researchers and invited guests discuss current events, the latest developments in academic research, and the ethical challenges posed by sexual violence research and practice. You can also find out about our Events Programme and join our Mailing List.

You can keep in touch with us in the following ways:

Website: shame.bbk.ac.uk

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Facebook: [@shmebbk](https://www.facebook.com/shmebbk)

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