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Culture, Health and Sexuality - Decision on Manuscript ID TCHS-2023-0049

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From Culture, Health and Sexuality <onbehalf@manuscriptcentral.com>

To <lynn.kennedy@populationproject.ca>

Reply-To <chs@unsw.edu.au>

Date

2023-05-01 00:37

01-May-2023

Dear Lynn,

I am writing in connection with your paper entitled, The Changing Meaning Of “No” In Canadian Sex Work Advertising: Peace of Mind, Safety and Race recently submitted to Culture, Health and Sexuality.

I am sorry to inform you that having carefully reviewed its contents, we are unable to accept it for publication. Copies of our referees’ comments, which may be helpful to you, can be found at the end of this message.

I am sorry to bring you what I am sure will be disappointing news, but you will understand I am sure that we must be guided by the judgements of our academic referees.

Thank you for considering Culture, Health and Sexuality as a possible journal in which to publish your work.

With all good wishes,

(Professor) Peter Aggleton

Editor-in-Chief, Culture, Health & Sexuality

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Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 1

Comments to the Author [**Author responses in bold.**]

A potentially very interesting paper but with awkward English. Overuse of the word "corpora" please replace. The results section needs to be vastly pared down, while a cogent analytical discussion of deeper forces of racism (please do not confuse ethnicity and race) is missing and needs to be added and frame the analysis. **The results section has been edited and clarified and more detailed discussion on race has been added. The words "corpus" and "corpora" (which are fairly common for this type of analysis) were changed to "collection" and "collections".**

Reviewer: 2

Comments to the Author

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. The manuscript addresses an issue that is very important and relevant to sex workers and the landscape of online advertising. Unfortunately, there are some flaws in the manuscript that limit the paper's contributions.

1. The paper does not state clear research questions or objectives. This makes it challenging for the reader to follow the methods, results and discussion sections. It is unclear what the specific goals of the study are. As one example, the findings presented on safety do not appear to be connected to other key findings in the study. Without an explicit statement of research questions, it is unclear why those findings are included in the manuscript. This is just one example. There are several other places in the results section where the relevance of the findings is unclear. **This has been added.**
2. The paper lacks a theoretical framework to orient the reader to the authors' underlying assumptions related to relevant constructs, including sex work (e.g., are the authors using a structural determinants of health framework?). Alongside an explicit statement of research questions, a theoretical framework would help scope the paper so that the findings are more clearly interpretable for the reader. **This has been added in the discussion.**
3. There are limitations of the data sources that are not adequately taken up in the

analysis. As an example, the three time periods are not comparable as they include different characteristics (e.g., single province, multiprovince, ethnicity data). The authors' conclusions drawn from comparing different timepoints appear to be unsubstantiated for this reason. **The analysis by time period was split into two: one based on advertisers who advertised in BC and one where all advertisers were considered but the 2007-2009 data was excluded.**

4. As a result of the limitations of the paper outlined above, the findings on restricting clients based on race or ethnicity raise more questions than answers. This finding takes up quite a bit of space in the Discussion, yet is based on a “significant minority”. The strength and value of these findings needs to be carefully weighed in that they may potentially do harm to the sex work community: they are potentially stigmatizing for an already stigmatized group. If the authors feel these findings are worth reporting then they need to be appropriately contextualized in relation to the criminalization of sex work and the self-management of safety by sex workers. The risks associated with criminalization may make it necessary for sex workers to be overly restrictive in order to try as best as possible to manage their safety. There is an absence of discussion on the reasons why sex workers may need to make these decisions; here again, a theoretical framework would be of great benefit in interpreting the findings. **We need to alert people that this is happening before we can understand why it is happening. At the moment, it is not feasible for us to do interview or questionnaire studies as we do not have access to an ethics board to vet the research. A statement regarding the right of any worker to refuse service has been added.**
5. The writing and clarity can be strengthened. There are sections of the paper that are very hard to follow. **This was partly because the journal required that all figures and tables be moved to the end of the paper. However, the description of the findings has been streamlined and simplified.**