Study Examines the Effects of Sexual Harassment, Assault on Researchers' Careers

**Release Date:**
Thursday, October 19, 2017 9:51 am EDT

**Terms:**
American Anthropologist, All Journals and Research, Social Sciences

**Dateline City:**
Chichester

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Investigators who previously reported on sexual harassment and assault during academic fieldwork have now shed light on the effects of such violations on individuals and their career trajectories. The findings, which are published in *American Anthropologist* reveal that sexual harassment may be as prevalent in science as it is in Hollywood.

For their study, Dr. Robin Nelson, of the Department of Anthropology at Santa Clara University and her colleagues interviewed 26 scientists who had conducted field research across the life, physical, and social sciences. Many described field contexts with ambiguous or absent rules regarding appropriate behavior, or an absence of consequences when rules were broken. Several respondents described explicit instances where they believed their negative field experiences directly led to instances of career stalling, lateral career moves, or leaving their career paths altogether.

The team also found that positive experiences in the field enhanced the career, research, and leadership trajectories of respondents. Also, respondents who stayed in the academic pipeline despite negative experiences made efforts to provide positive experiences and context for their trainees and junior collaborators.

The findings suggest that codes of conduct and accountability for transgressions—in other words, rules and the enforcement of rules regarding appropriate behavior—are integral to fostering productive research, positive field-work experiences, and equal opportunity in professional development.

“It is time to hold researchers who violate the physical and emotional safety of our colleagues accountable. Our junior colleagues have to be as important as our findings,” said Dr. Nelson. “As researchers, we must examine the ways that the status quo in our professional circles perpetuates bias, gender and otherwise. Only then we will succeed in creating inclusive work spaces.”

**Additional Information**


**About Journal**

*American Anthropologist* is the flagship journal of the American Anthropological Association, reaching well over 12,000 readers with each issue. The journal advances the Association’s mission through publishing articles that add to, integrate, synthesize, and interpret anthropological knowledge; commentaries and essays on issues of importance to the discipline; and reviews of books, films, sound recordings and exhibits.

**Language:**
English