

**Speaking out.** Bioanthropologist Kathryn Clancy and colleagues asked about fieldwork experiences.

and publishing research ... can have potent consequences for academic careers,” Hinde writes in e-mail.

Clancy’s team is expanding its survey to researchers in other areas of science. “I have had people from nonbioanthro field sites contact me,” she says. “This is definitely not limited to just my discipline.”

Researchers in other fields say that they have run into similar problems. One suggests a simple remedy: “It seems that having a woman in charge of a field site has a positive effect,” says Mary Albert, a veteran earth scientist at Dartmouth College. Albert, who has spent months at remote sites drilling ice cores, says that she has been sexually harassed and groped twice by senior scientists. “But never in the field. In my experience, sexual harassment is worse in the office.” She adds that she started going into the field only as a senior scientist.

The road ahead may be difficult for bioanthropology, a traditionally male field where women are flooding in. Research has shown that sexual harassment is more likely to occur in an environment where females “are occupying typically male gender roles,” says Sandy Hershcovis, a psychologist at the

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

## Survey of Peers in Fieldwork Highlights an Unspoken Risk

It was standing room only at 8:15 a.m. last Saturday in a session on ethics at the annual meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (AAPA) in Knoxville, Tennessee. The talk had nothing to do with traditional problems facing anthropology, such as respecting cultures or sharing data. Instead, it focused on how researchers treat each other. The speaker, Kathryn Clancy, a bioanthropologist at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, had troubling data to share: A survey of her colleagues’ fieldwork experiences revealed a high incidence of sexual harassment. The abuses ranged from subtle gender exclusion to sexual assault. The victims were mostly female, and the perpetrators were mostly senior researchers, sometimes the victim’s own fieldwork mentor.

“I am shocked, angry, disillusioned, and sad,” outgoing AAPA President Lorena Madrigal wrote to *Science* in an e-mail. “I just thought this did not happen anymore, and I am still in shock to hear that it does.”

The idea for the survey took shape in 2011, Clancy says, when she learned that a friend had been raped in the field by a colleague and that a mentor convinced the victim to keep quiet for the sake of her career. “It was like a slap in the face,” Clancy says. It was unlike her own Ph.D. fieldwork, which she describes as “paradise.”

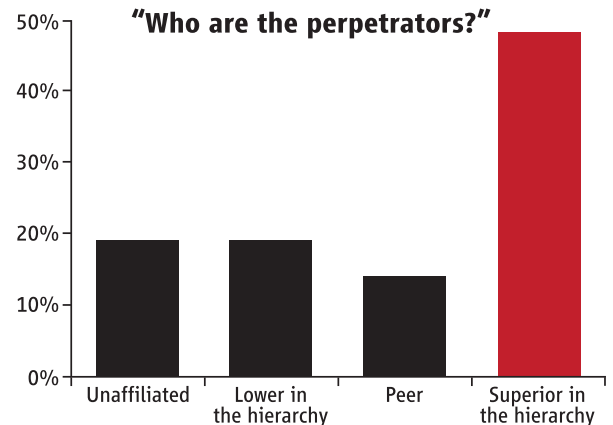
Her friend had opted for silence, but not Clancy, who has a powerful megaphone—she writes a blog for *Scientific American*. Starting in January of last year, she started posting anonymized sexual harassment horror stories that female colleagues shared with her. Anonymous comments started rolling in from fellow scientists. Clancy then teamed up with three of her bioanthropology colleagues—Katie Hinde of Harvard University; Robin Nelson of the University of California,

Riverside; and Julianne Rutherford of the University of Illinois, Chicago—and launched an online survey asking colleagues to share their fieldwork experiences.

At the AAPA meeting, Clancy presented the first month of survey data, based on responses from 98 women and 23 men. Women were far more frequently the target of inappropriate sexual comments, 63% compared with 39% for men. Most troubling, 21% of women reported that they had experienced “physical sexual harassment or unwanted sexual contact.” One of the 23 men did as well. Most of the reported abuse happened within the team of researchers, usually perpetrated by someone higher in the professional hierarchy.

The true prevalence of abuse in the field is unknown, because the survey respondents were self-selected. But John Hawks, an anthropologist at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, who attended Clancy’s talk, points out that male and female respondents witnessed the same reality. “Male students in the field had exactly the same distribution of perceptions about the presence and severity of abuses as did females,” he says.

The reaction to the survey has been overwhelmingly supportive, Hawks says, but there are concerns about its impact. “I spoke to some very senior people in the field who are worried about how making this stuff public will damage public perceptions,” he says. But “it is time to do something about this problem.” Hinde points out that while U.S. laws prohibit sexual and racial discrimination, a victim may hesitate to take action. “Quitting a field site, not completing



**Harassment survey.** Responses from 98 women and 23 men show that superiors may often be to blame.

University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. “Men use sexual harassment to exert control, knock them down, or put them in their place.” It’s rarely about sex or attraction, she says.

Clancy’s survey is ongoing and has expanded to other areas of science that involve fieldwork. If you are a field scientist from any discipline, you can take the survey at <http://bit.ly/fieldexp13>.

—JOHN BOHANNON

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