Out and About?
Risks and other challenges of fieldwork for LGBTQIA+ scientists.

Ronnie Bailey-Steinitz (she/her/hers)
PhD Candidate, Anthropology
UC Santa Barbara
Outline

1. Personal experience
2. General risks of fieldwork
3. Added risks of queer fieldworkers
4. Activities
5. What can we do to make things better?
Some terms...

• **Gender identity**: your own, internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (or as someone outside of that gender binary). E.g., man, woman, trans woman, non-binary, gender-fluid

• **Sexual orientation**: describes a person's physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. E.g., straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, queer

• **Transgender**: people who have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from the cultural expectations of the sex that they were assigned at birth. Some people desire medical assistance to transition from one sex to another. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

• **Gender expression**: External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine

Queer exclusion from STEM fields

Hughes, 2018

• LGBTQ+ students are 8-10% less likely to be retained in STEM majors (despite greater research participation)
• Gender disparity in STEM is reversed in LGBTQ+ students
  • Queer male students drop out at higher rates
  • Queer female students retained at higher rate
• Possibly due to gender norms within these fields
  • Masculinity is encouraged over femininity

![Graph showing retention rates of Straight and Sexual minority students in STEM](image)
Fieldwork:

• Foreign researchers
• Local research assistants
• Cooks, guards, drivers
• Government officials
• Community members
“HOMOSEXUALITY IS OFTEN DENOUNCED AS "NON-UGANDAN", AN IMPORT FROM THE WEST. IT IS INTERESTING, THEN, TO LEARN THAT HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY WAS GENERALLY ACCEPTED IN UGANDA UNTIL THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT OUTLAWED IT IN THE 1800S.”


50% of countries that criminalize homosexuality belong to the Commonwealth, governing 25% of world population

African sexuality and the legacy of imported homophobia

In June, Botswana overturned colonial-era laws which criminalised homosexuality, with the judge, Michael Leburu, declaring that “the anti-sodomy laws are a British import” and were developed “without the consultation of local peoples”.

GOD LOVES UGANDA
HAVE YOU HEARD THE GOOD NEWS?
HD TRAILER
The Challenges of Fieldwork for LGBTQ+ Geoscientists

A new survey reveals the unique issues that traveling for research poses for LGBTQ+ scientists. The data should help us create solutions that foster safety and inclusion.

By A. R. O’Shea and W. R. Douwe 22 August 2020
Why is risk heightened during field work?

- Interpersonal interactions
- Isolation
- Confined physical/social area
- Physically demanding work
- Time and funding pressure
- Gatekeeping, field culture, hierarchies
The Dark Side of Being a Female Shark Researcher

Being a scientist should not require developing the grit to continually endure misogyny, discrimination, harassment, assault or bullying.

By Catherine Macdonald on August 10, 2020
Harassment in Field Settings

Survey of Academic Field Experiences (SAFE): Trainees Report Harassment and Assault


Published: July 16, 2014 • https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0102172

• 32 academic disciplines
  • 75% witnessed harassment
  • 64% experienced harassment
  • 20% experienced sexual assault

• Trainees most vulnerable

• Instigated by
  • Senior researchers (for women)
  • Peers (for men)
Why is risk heightened during field work?

- Interpersonal interactions ➔ Reveal personal information
- Isolation ➔ Impaired mental health
- Confined physical/social area ➔ Trapped in harmful environment
- Physically demanding work ➔ Healthcare might be unsafe
- Time and funding pressure ➔ Delays, poor outcomes for research
- Gatekeeping, field culture, hierarchies ➔ Harassment
Queerness and Violence

• Gender role ideology and LGBTQ+ violence are often linked (Alden & Parker, 2004)
• Homophobia is related to heightened levels of masculinity (Parrot et al., 2002)
• Homophobic hostility leads to extreme self-surveillance where gender roles are enforced (Mason, 2001)
“For many lesbian and gay men the knowledge they may be targeted for homophobic violence … becomes a variable in the mapping of safety, whether they have directly encountered violence or not.”

–Gail Mason, Body Maps (2001)

For queer people, the feeling of safety in a new situation will depend on previous experiences
Intersectionality

- Anti-LGBT+ violence (in the US) is experienced differently depending on the race and gender of the victim
- Queerness is treated differently based on context

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**People of Color Are Far More Likely to Be Victims of Anti-LGBT Crimes**

In 2019, at least 25 transgender or gender non-conforming people were fatally shot or killed by other violent means.

- 91% of them were Black women.
- 81% were under the age of 30.
- 68% lived in the South.

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**Race and Ethnicity of Survivors of Color**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race and Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/a</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/American Indian/Indigenous</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander American</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab/Middle Eastern</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 1 – fieldwork prep

1. Off the top of your head, list **as many field safety resources** that your institutions offer (3 min)
   - Online information, handouts
   - Protocols, courses
   - Gear

2. Go to your institution’s website. Make a list of safety resources **specifically for LGBTQ+ field researchers** (10 min)
   - Student Health Services
   - Office of Field Safety
   - LGBTQ+ Resource Center
   - Others?
Why is fieldwork important?

~75% agree

~80% had field experience (60% had > a few months)

Fieldwork as Preparation for Graduate Studies

A 2020 survey of faculty in PhD-granting anthropology departments in US universities

Michelle Brown, PhD
Department of Anthropology, UCSB
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![Percentage of students who left STEM](chart)
LGBTI Travelers

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) travelers can face unique challenges when traveling abroad. Laws and attitudes in some countries may affect safety and ease of travel. Legal protections vary from country to country. Many countries do not legally recognize same-sex marriage. More than seventy countries consider consensual same-sex sexual relations a crime, sometimes carrying severe punishment.
Activity 2 – In the field

A man is carrying out fieldwork in Malaysia. He finishes work for the day and video-calls his male-presenting partner back home. A staff member overhears the conversation, and word about his identity quickly spreads in the community.

The next day, the researcher is injured in the field and needs medical care. He is rushed to a local hospital but is refused care because of his identity.

1. Go to: [www.pridefieldnetwork.com](http://www.pridefieldnetwork.com) then, Fieldwork Safety Map
   - What anti-queer laws are in place in this region?
   - Is the risk for queer people only legal or there a risk to their physical safety as well?

2. As a team leader, how would you address the situation? Who would you involve? Would your institution intervene?
What can we do?

1. Increase visibility, inclusivity
ALLY

Safe Space
Landscape of uncertainty

• Types of fieldwork vary
• Fieldwork may be done alone, in groups
• Research team:
  • university-affiliates
  • non-affiliated academics/institutions
  • non-affiliated locals
• Working environment:
  • Working or social hierarchies
  • Community interactions
  • Cultural norms
What can we do?

2. Promote a safe environment
   • Use of pronouns, dissemination of resources
   • Create dialogue (ask, listen, intervene)
   • All gender restrooms
   • Personal spaces
   • Bullying and harassment guidelines
   • Equal opportunity guidelines for recruitment
   • Confidentiality guidelines
   • Cultural awareness guidelines
   • Clear reporting structure

E.g., https://rcsgd.sa.ucsb.edu/education/supporting-lgbtq-students-in-the-classroom
Additional considerations

• What about non-U.S. citizen (international, undocumented) researchers?
• Who has the primary responsibility for researchers’ safety?
• How do we negotiate the legal vs. social aspects of queer presentation and safety?
• The safety of queer researchers should be a priority for the institution, including at home
  • Is it though?
A Lawsuit Accuses Harvard of Ignoring Sexual Harassment by a Professor

The controversy surrounding John Comaroff, an anthropologist, has divided the faculty, with scholars like Jill Lepore and Henry Louis Gates Jr. supporting their colleague.

Texas’ Trans Kids Are Targets in a Brutal GOP Culture War

A new vigilante scheme requires everyone to report on transgender youth—or face prosecution.

Amendment to "Don't Say Gay" bill in Florida requires schools to out students to their parents within six weeks hill.cm/bReBlX8
What can we do?

3. Think queer
   • What are the local laws?
   • What are the local gender norms (behavior/dress)?
   • What are the sleeping arrangements? Bathrooms?
   • Is there mention of queerness in the guide/code?
   • How would a student know they can be out to me?
   • How do I know it’s okay to be out to other members of the team?
   • How personal do conversations get in the field?
   • If I’mouted, will I be able to get my work done?
   • If I’m ou ted and it is not safe, who can I turn to?
   • If I’m outed and it is not safe, can I get away to a place that is safe?
   • If I’m harassed for being queer, what are my options?
Some resources

https://www.pridefieldnetwork.com/
https://queerbioanth.org/
https://vimeo.com/showcase/7537077/video/456671555

https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq/orientation

Additional resources available in the shared Google Drive folder
Questions?