

# FISST Training



## Fieldwork Initiative to Stop Sexualized Trauma

[www.fieldworkinitiative.org](http://www.fieldworkinitiative.org)

---

### Student Seminar Agenda

*Duration: 105 minutes*

#### **Overhead Training Outcomes:**

- ❖ Students will have a reinforced understanding that they should never have to endure sexual trauma as part of their fieldwork or as a rite of passage as a researcher.
- ❖ Students will learn how to make a bilateral plan with their research advisors about how to report gendered violence.
- ❖ Students will be given a corpus of various strategies on how to minimize potentially dangerous situations, stressing that violence in the field is never their fault.
- ❖ Students will learn that they will be supported in their decisions to leave or pause future fieldwork in the event that dangerous conditions arise.
- ❖ Students will be connected with various resources which seek to protect them, as well as larger networks for fieldwork researchers.
- ❖ Students will be guided in considering the unique dynamics of their own field sites and will be encouraged to research local politics, power dynamics, and safety contacts prior to arriving in the locations and community where they plan to work. Students will be given the opportunity to connect with others doing work in the same locale through the 'Women\* in the Field' networking group.

## **SESSION AGENDA:**

### **I. Introduction [5 minutes]**

The speaker introduces themselves and gives background information on the Fieldwork Initiative and the FISST Training. The audience will be guided through the trainings aforementioned objectives and outcomes.

### **II. Addressing Misconceptions [10 min]**

The speaker guides students in outlining the current beliefs regarding research and fieldwork as they exist in the public status quo and within academia. Students will trace the history of dominant beliefs within their domain and be led into our new framework of subjective reflexivity which considers not only how we impact the outcome of our research but also how the research experience comes to impact the individual. In debunking the common myths and misconceptions, students will be given the tools to separate realistic concerns with those which contribute to misplaced blame, guilt, and imposter syndrome.

### **III. Problems Doing Fieldwork [20 min]**

Students will explore the difficulties of fieldwork and learn the difference between productive struggles and destructive struggles. They will learn to identify the three main hazards affecting researchers in the field (as outlined by Sociologists Rebecca Hanson and Patricia Richard): solitude, danger, & intimacy.

- a) *Solitude*: Student will come to understand the social, geographical, and linguistic barriers that researchers may face in new, unfamiliar environments- including but not limited to isolation, racial/ethnic/political/religious discrimination, linguistic loneliness, otherization, imposter syndrome and anxiety/depression.
- b) *Danger*: Students will learn about dangerous or hazardous situations that can occur in unfamiliar settings- including but not limited to natural disasters, crime, the violation of local taboos, hazing, war, illness, and other happenings which can cause first or second-hand trauma.
- c) *Intimacy*: Students will examine the realities of gendered/sexualized violence which have occurred during the fieldwork experience- including but not limited to fraught local power dynamics and gender roles, body policing, bullying, transphobia, sexual harassment/assault, breached comfort boundaries, and LGBTQ issues amidst oppressive heteronormative/patriarchal settings.

*\*All aforementioned issues will be showcased through real world accounts, statistics, or hypothetical scenario examples.*

#### **IV. Problems Reporting Violence and Seeking Help [15 min]**

Students will come to understand the logistical, mental, and emotional barriers researchers face in reporting problematic or traumatic fieldwork situations. Through this, they will learn that doing fieldwork in no ways requires one to endure uncomfortable, dangerous, or damaging situations as a “necessary evil”; and also be given a corpus of resources and avenues for which to report problems, seek advice, request further support, or find emergency intervention.

#### **V. The Self Advocacy Toolkit [20 min]**

Students will learn tips on how to avoid potentially dangerous situations, and be given methods on how to approach potentially problematic situations safely. Dedicated time will be spent addressing strategies for street/sexual harassment and bystander intervention, as well as tools for navigating problematic relationships with research interlocutors. Specific conversational scripts will be given to help students who may struggle to initiate difficult conversations with a perpetrator or with their own advisor. Students will be given a copy of the MeToo Fieldwork Safety Handbook, and will be invited to join the ‘Women\* in the Field’ networking community to connect with other researchers in their region for further support. Students will be encouraged to demarcate a safe person within their department, community, or social circle who they can talk to (apart from the additional support resources provided).

#### **VI. Discussion Section and Q&A [30 min]**

Students will be invited to answer stimulating questions about their own fieldwork designed to encourage pre-emptive consideration and foresight about the unique problems that may arise once they reach their destination and begin to engage with the local community. The floor will then open up for questions regarding any of the aforementioned topics, or about the general practice of doing fieldwork.

#### **VII. Closing Statements [5 min]**

The speaker restates the main overarching takeaways of the FISST training, and shows students how to access and navigate the Fieldwork Initiative website in the event they need future help or support. Students will be reminded that fieldwork can pose problems, but is also an extremely positive, transformative, and joyful experience as well. The speaker will thank the audience and host for their attention and thereby call the session to a close.