Sexual harassment is a major issue facing field researchers today. Results of a recent survey of biological anthropologists showed women trainees are most often targeted by experienced male colleagues and field supervisors. Data reveals that female field researchers face greater harassment experiences than their male colleagues, and this is particularly important for female archaeologists. First, sexual harassment is severe. Second, it is harmful to the profession. It undermines not only our projects in the field, but it may actually curtail the careers of some female researchers. By undertaking this survey, SCAC seeks a clear message that they are concerned about this topic and want to ensure that all members are welcome in the organization.

### Methods

In order to allow the SEAC Survey data to be comparable to that of other surveys on Academic Field Experience (SAFE), this survey was based on theirs. In order to get the authors’ permission. The survey was distributed to committee members, who modified it to make sure the data reflects the needs of SCAC and to generate data to answer specific questions. In addition, experts on measuring sexual harassment in this profession were consulted in the preparation of the survey.

The American Cultural Resources Association (ACRA) Board granted permission to use their employment information. The survey was beta-tested, sent to five male and five female archaeological field supervisors who had fieldwork experience out the Southeast; additional modifications were made based on their responses. IRB approval was granted in September 2013 by the Office of Student Affairs at the University of Mississippi. Survey data is owned by the southeastern archaeological conference.

The survey opened in September 2014 and will stay open until November 2016, 2014. As of November 5, 2016, 224 responses had been received. Information was also posted on the SCAC website. Additional respondents were garnered through contacting large CR companies who work primarily in the Southeast and all professional archaeology vacations in the Southeast were asked to forward a link to the survey. Finally, all academy members who were contacted were asked if they had received the survey. In order to take the survey, respondents need to self-identify as a female archaeologist, and in order to identify and provide feedback on the sexual harassment experiences of their colleagues, those who are current or recent members of SCAC were identified. Therefore, the survey identifies one’s role in the field, field security, and fieldwork settings, as well as the percentage of individuals who have experienced unwanted contact, but the range is generally small (9%-18%).

### Results

The two primary questions for this survey are:

1. Does Sexual Harassment Occur in the Field? Preliminary Results of the SEAC Sexual Harassment Survey

2. Has the frequency of harassment changed through time?

### Discussion & Conclusions

This study shows that women in southeastern archaeology, disproportionately face sexual harassment and sexual assault. All women experienced some form of harassment, and if the field were women, although men were not immune from these experiences. This trend in data has been noted in other studies as well. 1,2,3

These data reflect patterns observed by the SAFE team. In contrast to SAFE, however, the SCAC survey produced data reflecting both academic and non-academic contexts, and it had more equitable response rate from men and women (77.5% female SAFE; 38% female SCAC).

Survey results also indicate that early career archaeologists are the most vulnerable to sexual harassment and sexual assault. The SAFE survey often predicted that the most harassment and sexual assault experienced during this formative stage may discourage field research and undermine women’s ability to succeed in professions. Female trainees are more likely to be harassed than male trainees and this may be linked to retention rates of women in field-based sciences. The SCAC Sexual Harassment survey is able to speak directly to this issue, over a quarter of respondents reported negative impacts of sexual harassment on their careers, including changing field sites, research trajectories, and jobs within archaeology.

The majority of respondents reported a lack of awareness of sexual harassment policies and codes of conduct. likewise, the percentage of respondents with knowledge of a policy regarding sexual harassment was relatively low, in part, particularly in the early data. Whether archaeologists are aware of a policy and how respondents who answered “yes” to having been the victim of unwanted sexual contact in the field. 79% did not report the incident. In addition, 79% of respondents who identified as female reported having experienced sexual harassment. These data are particularly concerning and should prompt us to begin rethinking the parameters within which we are placing potentially vulnerable members of our community, those who are near to field work, and potentially those who are not represented by a institution, such as volunteers.

While there is no reason to ensure that everyone on a field site takes care to not offend, or makes others feel uncomfortable, it is always clear that, as a field team, we are failing short of offering our students, volunteers, and employees a safe field environment. By having a code of conduct, harassment policies, and clear mechanisms of reporting, we also are creating a climate of impunity for those who may be responsible for such behavior. To address the issue, we have put in place a series of policies that go beyond the normal terms and conditions for employment. A number of these are the result of our broader efforts to create a more equitable environment, and we may hope that they will help to make our field program a healthier and more productive experience.

As we continue to parse out data obtained in this study, we hope to provide additional insights regarding the contexts and demographics of sexual harassment and unwanted sexual contact. Our study focuses on sex and hetero-normativity, and we are able to make recommendations based on the concepts of gender and sexual orientation. In addition, the SAFE team adapted “Adapting the principle of sexual harassment to address the unique circumstances of women in prehistory: preliminary solutions.” 1 Perhaps more than the broad sample was that in study, we also have an opportunity to put those words into practice as a relatively small, independent organization, we can hold each other accountable, and as a community, ensure that those members of our community who do not number sexual harassment and sexual assault among their field experiences.

---

References


---


citations and references here