ACUA Commentary on Harassment and Intimidation

It’s a situation that we have all seen at least once in our careers—in the bar at a meeting, in the field during fieldwork, with co-workers over dinner—a remark, a story, or even a gesture transforms a colleague from an equal into “eye candy” or “a little princess,” “a cowboy” or “a pain in the ass.” Most of the time we react to our baser feelings by venting appropriately and privately, but a recent study conducted by Kathryn Clancy and her colleagues put numbers on a disturbing practice—younger members of field sciences (and not just underwater archeology) are getting sexually assaulted and harassed with unacceptable frequency. As it turns out, based on the following quote from the study, there are more to our remarks than just words:

“...the experience of harassment or assault during the early career stage may have the most negative impact on the most professionally vulnerable in our disciplines. Moreover, bystanders to workplace incivility, particularly women, are demoralized even though they are not the direct targets of the perpetrator” (Clancy et. al. 2014).

The Advisory Council on Underwater Archeology (ACUA) has read the report and we believe it is time to do something about all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, during fieldwork and in the discipline as a whole.

The truth is that underwater archaeology takes us away from our families, friends, and spouses, puts us in a place that seems far removed from the norms of society; and at times, subjects us to extraordinary stresses to achieve results in an environment where we control only a fraction of the variables on a good day. Yet as the ACUA statement on harassment in the field notes below: “The fact that we often live and work in close confines for extended periods of time makes it all the more important that we strive to establish reasonable codes of behavior for all.”

Thirty years ago a common refrain from our terrestrial colleagues was that “underwater archaeology was a contradiction in terms.” Thankfully we are well past that, and the field has matured and professionalized to the point where we make substantive contributions to the understanding of the human past on a regular basis. Yet the fact remains that we are still a relatively young sub-discipline, so we have to be better than average just to be average. Establishing the expectation that everyone in our field will be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their stature, seniority, or position, is the right thing to do. The following statement on harassment and intimidation is offered as a positive next step in this important process.

ACUA: Statement on Harassment and Intimidation
Adopted on September 3, 2014

Background: A study released in April of 2014 (Clancy et. al. 2014) brought to light and quantified something that many of us in the discipline of underwater archeology have observed over the course of our careers—that sexual harassment in particular and harassment in general, is something that is troublingly common in the field. Incidents of harassment during fieldwork or elsewhere corrode the atmosphere of mutual respect that is the backbone of scholarship and professionalism for our field, inhibit participation by valued junior colleagues, and discourage diversity that brings relevance to our inquiries. For these reasons among many, the ACUA therefore declares that instances of harassment in underwater archaeology are completely unprofessional and unacceptable.

Definitions:

**Sexual Harassment** is defined as deliberate or repeated unsolicited verbal comments, gestures or physical contact of a sexual nature which are unwelcomed. Sexual harassment is occurring when:
• submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's employment, opportunities, or professional advancement;
• submission to or rejection of such contacts or behavior form the basis of a decision affecting such an individual; or
• such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive professional environment.

Some of the most obvious forms of sexual harassment include touching, grabbing, lewd gestures, jokes with a sexual connotation, publicly displayed images of a sexual nature, and any behavior with sexual overtones that is intimidating or offensive to the recipient or to one who observes such behavior or displays.

Harassment, by extension, is defined as deliberate or repeated unsolicited verbal comments, gestures, displays, or physical contacts that are demeaning or derogatory to a particular individual or group and are therefore unwelcomed. Harassment is occurring when:
• these behaviors occur with the express or implied intention of isolating or alienating an individual or sub-group from the larger group;
• differences in attributes such as an individual’s age, race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or religion, are entwined with legitimate and healthy differences in opinion or scientific interpretation; or
• such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive professional environment.

Some of the most obvious forms of harassment include comments or jokes that are derogatory of a certain group or individual based upon attributes as outlined above; publicly displayed images that are offensive to a co-worker, and any behavior that is intimidating or offensive to the recipient or to one who observes such behavior or displays.

Request:
The ACUA hereby requests that all our members educate themselves on the issues surrounding harassment and intimidation and take individual and collective actions to combat instances during fieldwork and elsewhere. These steps could include actions such as:
• Clearly explaining to all students, staff, and participants at the outset of fieldwork, a policy and expectation regarding harassment during the project.
• Adopting and explaining a process to formally and informally address and confirm allegations of harassment and inappropriate behavior in a work or learning environment—and communicating this process to all members of the group.
• Consciously setting a standard and expectation of appropriate behavior in oneself and others regardless of the situation or setting.
• Actively speaking out when harassing behavior is observed, be it directed at oneself or another individual.

While fieldwork represents some of the most challenging and rewarding aspects of underwater archaeology, our colleagues, students, and junior members have every right to expect a uniform standard of dignity and respect wherever the workplace may be. Because we often live and work in close confines for extended periods of time it is all the more important that we strive to establish reasonable codes of behavior for all. Clearly delineating boundaries of acceptable practice as well as creating a fair, transparent and rational framework for addressing issues as they arise is an important step in the continuing professionalization of the field. The Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology takes the
strongest possible exception to instances of harassment, sexual or otherwise, during fieldwork and elsewhere and requests that all of our colleagues work towards eliminating its occurrence.

Reference
Clancy KBH, Nelson RG, Rutherford JN, Hinde K

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