

# ASOR Code of Conduct for Fieldwork Projects

November 2018 Draft

## 1. Statement of Purpose and Principles

Archaeological fieldwork is an important element of training and professional practice for many ASOR members. The special conditions and challenges of fieldwork combine separation from familiar institutional resources and support systems with intensive academic and social interaction. Archaeological fieldwork also takes place in settings with varied norms and laws. These contexts require that those leading archaeological fieldwork take extra care to avoid violations of professional conduct.

The rules and standards of our home institutions for appropriate workplace behavior apply to these fieldwork settings. U.S. colleges and universities that receive federal funds are further bound by Title IX protections against sex discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Beyond these policies, since 2015, ASOR's [Policy on Professional Conduct](#) has held up the expectation that members "refuse to practice discrimination based on categories such as gender, religion, age, race, disability, and sexual orientation in assembling a research team" (paragraph III.C.4), and "take all necessary steps to minimize personal risks and hazards to co-workers, the public, and the environment; including, but not limited to, avoiding harassment based on categories noted in paragraph C.4; and developing action plans in the event of civil or military disturbance, or injury" (paragraph III.C.5). This document takes gender to include real or perceived gender identity and adds the other federally-protected categories of familial status (i.e., marital and parental situation, including pregnancy), color, and national origin.

This document is intended as a resource for all participants in ASOR-affiliated fieldwork projects. It outlines ASOR's expectations for ethical conduct in the field and recommends the implementation of best practices by which projects can promote the safety and well-being of all members, avoid conduct violations, and respond appropriately to problems that arise. ASOR is not the adjudicating body for violations of these standards; however ASOR members, all persons involved in ASOR-affiliated projects, and all persons interacting with ASOR-funded field students are expected to adhere to these guidelines.

## 2. Defining the Problem

Recent studies, including the "Survey on Field Safety: Middle East, North Africa, and Mediterranean Basin,"<sup>2</sup> have shown that harassment, discrimination, bullying, and even assault are common experiences in fieldwork settings among both female and male

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the requirements of Title IX, see U.S. Department of Education, "[Title IX and Sex Discrimination](#)."

<sup>2</sup> Nakhai, B.A. 2017a. "[Keeping Archaeological Field Work Safe from Sexual Harassment and Physical Violence](#)." *genderstudies.science*, May 21, 2017; *ead.* 2017b. "[Keeping archaeological field work safe from sexual harassment and physical violence](#)." The International Association for Assyriology, July 17, 2017.

participants.<sup>3</sup> Such behavior includes unwanted physical contact; negative, inappropriate, or intimidating comments regarding real or perceived gender, sexual orientation, familial status, race, color, national origin, religion, age, or disability; and inequitable access to fieldwork assignments and opportunities on the basis of these characteristics. Female respondents experienced these behaviors more often than males, and more commonly from senior project participants, while male respondents most commonly experienced them from peers.<sup>4</sup> Further discriminatory and alienating behaviors and situations sometimes found on field sites include a) different sets of rules and experiences for male and female project participants; b) gendered divisions of labor (for example, assigning shopping and cooking labor to female project participants);<sup>5</sup> c) unnecessary tests of physical prowess and endurance;<sup>6</sup> d) requiring participants with family obligations to be present for the entirety of very long field seasons; and e) unnecessarily forbidding children of participants to be present on projects.<sup>7</sup>

The consequences of these negative experiences, especially those perpetrated by superiors, can be very grave both for individuals' well-being and for their careers, contributing to systemic disparities in professional outcomes.<sup>8</sup> Yet many fieldwork projects lack basic provisions for the prevention and management of conduct violations, including a clear code of conduct, reporting structures, and/or consequences for violations.<sup>9</sup> The presence of explicit rules regarding appropriate behavior and clear and observable enforcement of these rules results in more positive field experiences for project participants.<sup>10</sup> In addition, it is important to have multiple individuals to whom violations of policies can be reported and to provide examples of unacceptable behavior

---

<sup>3</sup> Clancy, K.B.H., R.G. Nelson, J.N. Rutherford, and K. Hinde. 2014. "Survey of Academic Field Experiences (SAFE): Trainees Report Harassment and Assault." *PLOS ONE* 9(7). doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0102172; Nelson Robin G., Rutherford Julianne N., Hinde Katie, and Clancy Kathryn B. H. 2017. "Signaling Safety: Characterizing Fieldwork Experiences and Their Implications for Career Trajectories." *American Anthropologist* 119(4):710–22. doi:10.1111/aman.12929; Rocks-MacQueen, Doug. April 14, 2018. "[91 Stories of Archaeology](#)." Doug's Archaeology: Investigating the Profession and Research; Meyers, M.S., E.T. Horton, E.A. Boudreaux, S.B. Carmody, A.P. Wright, and V.J. Dekle. 2018. "[The Context and Consequences of Sexual Harassment in Southeastern Archaeology](#)." *Advances in Archaeological Practice*. doi:10.1017/aap.2018.23

<sup>4</sup> Clancy et al. 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Meyers et al. 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson et al. 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Family separation during long field seasons is an important reason that people in field-based disciplines change careers, are discouraged from entering such fields, or decide to forgo having children, and this problem disproportionately affects women (Lynn, C. D., M. E. Howells, and M. J. Stein. 2018. Family and the Field: Expectations of a Field-Based Research Career Affect Researcher Family Planning Decisions. *PLOS ONE* 13(9). doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0203500).

<sup>8</sup> Nelson et al. 2017 ; Meyers et al. 2018

<sup>9</sup> Nakhai 2017a; 2017b; Meyers et al. 2018

<sup>10</sup> Clancy et al. 2014; Nelson et al. 2017.

to student participants, who may not know exactly what constitutes appropriate professional behavior versus harassment or bullying.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, in the countries of the Middle East and wider Mediterranean where ASOR-affiliated projects take place, political volatility and military conflict have increased in the last decade. These developments require project leaders to plan for and respond to potential changes that affect the safety of the field team, according to governmental recommendations, the policies of sponsoring institutions, and norms of reasonable risk-taking. In such situations, conflicts over the appropriate course of action can arise among project participants that must be mediated in ways that minimize negative consequences for all.

The data collected by these recent studies concerning negative behavior in fieldwork settings<sup>12</sup> have been used to make several recommendations for how principal investigators, field directors, and others in positions of authority within field projects can help ensure that field participants have a safe and positive experience. ASOR members should take these best practices into account when planning, carrying out, or participating in fieldwork.

### 3. Guidelines for the Promotion of Safety and Ethical Conduct in Fieldwork Settings

ASOR members endeavor to establish a professional, safe, and non-discriminatory environment for archaeological field research.

- Regarding discrimination, ASOR members should:
  - Refuse to practice discrimination based on the categories of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and familial status including pregnancy in assembling a research team;
  - Allocate fieldwork opportunities and responsibilities regardless of gender and the other above-mentioned categories, except where precluded by local regulations;
  - When the need arises and conditions allow, permit participants' children to accompany them to the project;
  - Avoid discrimination against project members whose family obligations do not allow their presence throughout long field seasons, where possible within institutional rules and grant guidelines, as well as logistical and budgetary constraints;
- Regarding harassment, bullying, and violence, ASOR members should:
  - Educate themselves and other supervisory staff regarding a) signs of intolerance, harassment, or discrimination, b) their ethical responsibilities for safe and effective intervention and reporting misconduct, c) the policies and procedures of the project's sponsoring institution(s) (e.g., university,

<sup>11</sup> Muckle, R. J. 2014. [On Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Archaeology](http://onlinedigeditions.com/publication/?i=232900). *SAA Archaeological Record* 14 (5): 32-33. <http://onlinedigeditions.com/publication/?i=232900>.

<sup>12</sup> Clancy et al. 2014; Nelson et al. 2017; for a summary, see also Muckle 2014.

- museum, agency, or private nonprofit), and d) the laws and emergency procedures in the fieldwork area;
- o Establish field-site procedures, guidelines, and resources pertaining to harassment, bullying, intimidation, and violence that adhere to the policies of the project's sponsoring institution(s) and/or local institutions in the fieldwork area and that include multiple identified individuals to whom misconduct can be reported and clear consequences for conduct violations;
  - o Communicate to all project members before the start of fieldwork, in both written and oral form (including in the relevant local language, when advisable), the following: appropriate behaviors and potential forms of misconduct, including participants' rights and obligations, procedures for reporting violations of project policies, consequences for violations, and the following definition of harassment: harassment is conduct that unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or educational performance, or creates "a work environment that would be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people."<sup>13</sup> Sexual harassment is "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects a person's employment" or education.<sup>14</sup>
- Regarding safety, ASOR members should:
    - o Take all necessary steps to minimize personal and health risks and hazards to project members, including taking extra precautions in case emergency services are unavailable at the field site (e.g., bringing a health professional), monitoring the security situation and keeping in contact with officials in the home and host countries, and making an evacuation plan;
    - o Provide clear on-site safety and health-care procedures and guidelines, including contact information for emergency services, in both written and oral form (including in the relevant local language, when advisable);
    - o Respect the ability of project participants and their families to make different informed evaluations of current political and military situations and their implications for safety and to reconsider their fieldwork participation accordingly, even in the midst of a field season;
    - o Treat individuals equally who choose to leave or withdraw their project participation because of political or safety concerns and support these individuals equally with regard to their future project participation and/or career advancement;
  - Finally, ASOR members endeavor to promote understanding of and adherence to the guidelines contained in this Code of Conduct and foster a culture of tolerance and respect while conducting fieldwork.

---

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "[Harassment](#)."

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "[Facts About Sexual Harassment](#)."