

ASA Board of Directors
c/o Ron Wasserstein, ASA Executive Director
732 North Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-1943

January 22, 2019

Members of the Board of Directors of the American Statistical Association:

On behalf of the Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Assault, I submit the attached final report for your consideration. The Task Force has spent a considerable amount of time addressing the charges the Board presented to us, and is proud to be able to contribute to positive changes in the culture and practice of the statistical community.

Included with our report are the following items:

Appendix A: Langer report of the questionnaire to ASA membership regarding sexual misconduct

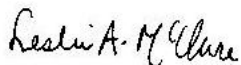
Appendix B: Recommended procedures for reporting and adjudicating complaints of sexual misconduct (version 1 includes our anonymized comments, version 2 is a clean copy)

Appendix C: ASA Activities Conduct Policy

We ask that the Board please review our report, and permit us to release both the Task Force Final Report (including the clean copy of Appendix B) and the Langer Final Report (Appendix A) to the ASA community. We invite the Board to provide responses to the recommendations indicating processes for accepting them or rationale for rejecting them, to be released in conjunction with the report.

We would like to thank the Board for allowing us the opportunity to make such a valuable contribution to our community.

Respectfully submitted:



Leslie McClure, on behalf of

Emma Benn
Maryclare Griffin
Donna LaLonde (our amazing ASA Liaison)
Ji-Hyun Lee

Sally Morton
Jean Opsomer
Robert Santos
Theresa Utlaut

**Final Report of the ASA Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Assault
Submitted January 22, 2019**

The members of the ASA Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Assault would like to begin by expressing our appreciation to the ASA Board of Directors for entrusting us with such an important task. When we started our work, we had no idea about the depth of discussions that awaited us. As diverse as the members of the Task Force are, representing different personal and professional perspectives, so were our discussions. We spent numerous hours trying to ensure that we pave the way for the ASA to lead changes not only in policy, but in climate, going forward. While our work has taken longer than we had expected, we are confident that we have vetted our recommendations carefully, considered different perspectives, surveyed the best practices from across other organizations, and carefully considered the feedback we received from the ASA membership and leadership, alike.

The original charges of the Task Force appear below, and we describe our actions with respect to each.

1. Assess the extent of sexual harassment/assault in the ASA community.
 1. Review surveys used by other professional organizations to assess the prevalence of sexual harassment/assault;
 2. Develop a survey to administer to the ASA membership to assess the frequency, location and kinds of harassment/assault occurring;
 3. ASA leadership to distribute the survey to ASA membership
 4. Summarize the findings from the survey
2. Review the current best practices of professional organizations and academic institutions with respect to sexual harassment/assault.
3. Consider creation of a resource that allows victims of sexual harassment and assault to anonymously receive support.
4. Make recommendations to the ASA Board of Directors regarding sexual harassment/assault policy changes for the organization.

1. Assess the extent of sexual harassment/assault in the ASA community.

Members of the Task Force with expertise in survey sampling and research design developed a Statement of Work (SOW) providing two paths to sampling the ASA Community about the occurrence of sexual misconduct in the community: a rigorous survey embedded in an informal census, or exclusive use of an informal collection of feedback via a census. We recognized that a rigorous sample survey could provide statistically valid prevalence estimates of harassment/abuse but at a high cost. Collection of feedback from a census of general membership (besides those who were sampled) could validate that the occurrence of harassment/abuse exists without the expense and burden of producing statistical estimates. Moreover, we anticipated that some ASA members might want to share their experiences and deserved a confidential platform to share their stories regardless of whether or not they fell into

a “random sample.” As such, we adopted a strategy that allowed bidders the opportunity to discuss the merits of alternative approaches.

The SOW formed the basis of the Request for Applications (RFA) that the ASA published to attract an external firm for developing, implementing, and analyzing the data collection. The ASA received four applications, with Langer Research Associates being selected. The adopted methodology was a general call for feedback via a census of membership. Below we provide a brief summary of process of distributing the data collection tool, as well as the results; the final report by Langer is attached as Appendix A.

Summary of Langer Final Report

In consultation with the ASA Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Assault and after review of previous studies, Langer Research Associates developed the Sexual and Gender-based Misconduct at American Statistical Association questionnaire. Drafts were refined in further discussion with ASA representatives, evaluation by an ASA-appointed academic expert and further review and comment by the ASA Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Assault. Respondents were promised anonymity.

The restricted-access online questionnaire was open for participation by ASA members from Oct. 11-28, 2018. All members listed in the Association’s then-current membership database received an introductory email from ASA Executive Director Ronald Wasserstein on Oct. 10, an initial invitation from Langer Research Associates on Oct. 11 and reminder invitations on Oct. 17, 22 and 25, provided that they did not opt out of receiving email communications from the ASA. All members were encouraged to provide feedback, whether or not they had experienced sexual- or gender-based misconduct. Out of 15,769 listed members, 3,507 participated, including 316 who started but did not complete the questionnaire whose answers were retained. Since they were not able to ascertain whether the experiences of those who participated in the study are different from those who chose not to participate, the researchers acknowledge that the results cannot be used to produce valid statistical estimates, but the results can be regarded as indicative, albeit not statistically representative, of the ASA membership. Indeed, the results reflect real experiences and real concerns of ASA members, and as such deserve recognition and consideration in the task force’s deliberations. Even one instance of harassment or assault is too much and deserves action.

The demographic composition of the participant population resembles the available demographic data on the full ASA membership. The largest differences reflect fewer Asians and fewer student members among study participants than in the full ASA membership, and more whites and regular members. Appendix A of the Langer Report compares the demographics for those participating in the study to those in the full ASA membership.

The final report submitted by Langer Research Associates provides a detailed analysis of the collected data and includes unedited (with the exception that names were redacted) comments from participants. For the purpose of this summary, we highlight key perceptions:

- Given what they have heard or experienced, 15 percent of feedback contributors regard sexual harassment at ASA events to be a problem or a major problem. Women and men say so about equally.
- Nineteen percent of study participants – 23 percent of women and 15 percent of men – consider other inappropriate gender-based behavior to be a problem or a major problem at ASA events. Such behavior may include gender-based disrespect, condescension or objectification.
- Thirteen percent of women (and 2 percent of men) have been warned by friends or colleagues to be on guard against sexually inappropriate behavior by a fellow attendee at an ASA event.
- Four percent of women (and 1 percent of men) have been warned to avoid specific ASA events because individuals who engaged in sexually inappropriate behavior might be in attendance.

We also asked about experiences at academic or professional events unrelated to the ASA. The responses make it clear that harassment and assault are broad problems in no way limited to ASA events. Fifty-eight percent of women who responded reported having experienced sexual harassment or behavior that may have been harassing in a workplace, graduate program or other career-related venue or meeting. This compares with 14 percent at ASA events among the study participants.

Comments and suggestions for ASA policy development on the issue of sexual harassment were also solicited. More than 800 members responded. Full verbatim responses are provided in Appendix C of the Langer final report, and the Task Force recommends that the Board engage someone with experience in qualitative analysis to do some text mining to determine whether specific themes emerge. For this summary, it is worth noting that many comments focused on the need for better distribution of the Meeting Conduct Policy, to whom a report should be made, transparency of the process for investigating allegations, and clarification on the consequences if a violation was confirmed. In addition to these focused actions, there were comments suggesting the need for change not only in policy but in the ASA's culture. This included calls for greater diversity throughout the association, and addressing disrespect, as well as outright harassment. Several comments also mentioned the provision of alcohol at ASA events.

Review the current best practices of professional organizations and academic institutions with respect to sexual harassment/assault.

The Task Force spent considerable amounts of time reviewing policies and procedures of other organizations with respect to sexual harassment and assault. This has been a moving target, as new policies are arising frequently. Our feeling is that while a number of organizations have good policies, there are few commonalities among them, and that each group has chosen paths

that are compatible with the scope, culture, and focus of their organizations. The recent National Academies Report [“Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine”](#) provides general guidance, specifically the section on the role of professional societies and organizations that facilitate research and training on pages 160-161. Additionally, we found several organizations’ policies to be useful in developing our recommendations for the ASA. In particular, we found the policies of the following organizations to be helpful references:

- [American Geophysical Union](#)
- [American Astronomical Society](#)
- [International Society for Bayesian Analysis](#)
- [American Political Science Association](#)
- [Association for Computing Machinery](#)
- [Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers \(IEEE\)](#)
- [American Society of Human Genetics](#)

Consider creation of a resource that allows victims of sexual harassment and assault to anonymously receive support.

We are pleased that the ASA provided an Ombuds service for the 2018 JSM, and appreciate the ASA’s plan to continue to use the service for future meetings. We strongly advocate for the ASA to employ an external resource for both reporting and investigating incidents of harassment and assault at ASA activities. Several organizations employ [EthicsPoint](#) for on-line, confidential reporting, and the Task Force strongly suggests that the ASA Board consider EthicsPoint, or a service that performs similarly in terms of functions, as a mechanism for reporting.

The Task Force believes that, for several reasons, it would be in the best interest of the ASA to engage an external group to receive, review, adjudicate, and rule on complaints of sexual misconduct. Some of the reasons we discussed include concerns about: conflict of interest, retaliation, and bias, and the inability to “unsee what has been seen.” We do want to note that the mechanisms for dealing with complaints of this type vary widely across organizations, everything from: farming out as much of the process as possible to handling all complaints internally. Regardless of how these complaints are adjudicated, at some point a ruling must come back to the ASA, and a decision as to how to respond must be made. One option the Task Force discussed is to engage a pool of people who are essentially “in-waiting,” and that when situations occur, a subset of this pool be engaged to accept the final ruling and determine appropriate consequences.

The Task Force has drafted recommended procedures for reporting and adjudicating complaints of sexual misconduct (two versions included as Appendix B: one with our confidential comments and the other a clean copy) (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1y4S6dwfchFaprMiUaEi8P5xyGyNvDjop7qJ357EQLng/e/dit?usp=sharing>), and listed potential consequences (based largely on those recommended by the American Geological Union). Some organizations couple the procedures for dealing with sexual misconduct with the process for dealing with violation of professional conduct codes;

given that there is currently no process for review/adjudication of professional misconduct in the ASA, the Task Force recommends that the Board consider ways to be efficient with developing policy for both. We have had much discussion about potential procedures, and have decided to leave these comments in one version of the document, so that the Board can get a better sense of our discussions.

We hope that as the Board develops a process that will work for the ASA, they will strongly rely on our recommendations.

Make recommendations to the ASA Board of Directors regarding sexual harassment/assault policy changes for the organization.

We are pleased that the ASA Board approved the revised ASA Activities Conduct Policy (attached as Appendix C) on November 30, 2018, and that it has been posted on the ASA website. The Task Force recommends that the Board plan to review the policy at regular intervals, and make revisions as needed, to ensure a clear and on-going message is provided to the membership. Further, we encourage the Board to implement structural changes that will make the policy more visible to the membership, as outlined in the recommendations below.

In addition to the revised ASA Activities Conduct Policy and the recommendations for procedures for reporting and adjudicating instances of sexual misconduct, below we provide a set of recommendations for concrete actions that the ASA can take to help improve the climate in our field, to ensure that all members of our community feel safe and welcome. We base these recommendations on the research we've done both internally and externally, data we've collected from a variety of sources, conversations we've had among ourselves, as well as discussions we've had with others. We feel strongly that it is the responsibility of the ASA Leadership to set the tone for the rest of the organization, and to send a clear message of equity and equality for all ASA members.

- Clear and frequent statements from the ASA leadership regarding problems with sexual misconduct and inequities, and the ASA's stance and policies on these problems, particularly at the JSM.
- Undertake actions to promote the revised ASA Activities Conduct Policy, and to make it more visible to ASA membership. Some mechanisms for doing so include:
 - Require members to indicate that they will abide by the policy when joining ASA and renewing their membership.
 - Continue to require members to indicate that they will abide by the policy when registering for ASA events (nationally, as well as locally).
 - Distribute the policy with registration materials at ASA-sponsored activities.
 - Include the policy on apps/paper versions of abstract books for ASA-sponsored meetings.
 - Display the policy on the "home screen" for the talks at ASA meetings, so that it is visible when attendees await sessions.

- Ensure distribution of the policy widely to membership, chapters, committees, sections, and other ASA entities, and encourage these entities to distribute the policy at their events.
- Review and revise the ASA Activities Conduct Policy at regular intervals to ensure a clear and on-going message is provided to the membership.
- The board should consider a process for reporting inappropriate slides during talks at ASA-sponsored meetings, and consequences.
 - This could be accomplished through adding a question to the session chair evaluation re: the presence of inappropriate slides to session chair surveys.
- Evaluate the policy about the availability of alcohol at ASA-sponsored events.
- Employ an external service (e.g. EthicsPoint, or something similar) for online, confidential reporting of instances of misconduct.
- Engage an external entity to review, investigate, and adjudicate and provide a ruling on complaints of sexual misconduct.
- Consider ways to be efficient with coupling consequences for sexual misconduct with consequences for professional misconduct.
- Strive for representation among appointees for journal editors, committee chairs, etc. that mirrors the ASA membership.
- Collect data on gender/race/ethnicity in areas where ASA can: journal editors, reviewers (e.g. # invited to review, # reviewing), submissions to journals.
- Continue to have open and frank discussions about sexual misconduct and gender discrimination among broad groups of ASA members (including at Caucus of Academic Representatives workshops).
- Require ASA members who are appointed to leadership roles to do implicit bias and ally trainings.
- Develop (or borrow) a webinar series that addresses issues surrounding sexual misconduct, including bystander/ally training, implicit biases, gender discrimination, as well as other forms of discrimination.
- Consider including language surrounding issues of sexual misconduct in the ASA Strategic Plan, in order to elevate the importance of addressing this topic, even after it perhaps falls out of public discussion.
- Engage an expert in qualitative analysis to mine the open-ended questionnaire responses for themes.

While the Task Force had lively discussions about a number of topics, we feel there are several issues still remaining that the Board will need to comprehensively address in the near future:

1. Is there a statute of limitations on complaints of misconduct?
2. How will the ASA interact with other entities, such as government agencies, companies and universities, both if a violation of the conduct policy occurs at an ASA sponsored activities, and if a violation occurs elsewhere.
3. What is the responsibility of the ASA to communicate findings from investigations into misconduct to:
 - a. Home institutions/organizations

- b. The ASA community
- 4. How will ASA be accountable to the membership for the investment in the resources to manage and adjudicate reports of sexual misconduct through reporting utilization (in aggregate) of those resources?

Finally, the Task Force recommends that the ASA (1) put permanent infrastructure into place that can continue to deal with these issues, and (2) periodically review and refresh the policies and procedures as necessary over time, as we believe that this is not a moment in time, but rather something that will continue to be a part of our profession going forward.