Harold Masursky Award:
The CSWA Survey on Workplace Climate and an Uncomfortable Conversation About Harassment

Dr. Christina Richey

The CSWA Survey on Workplace Climate
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With Gracious Support from the American Astronomical Society’s Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy (AAS CSWA)
– Why am I here?
– What’s this rumored problem?
– How can you be part of the solution?

**HARASSMENT**: unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetic information.

We have a problem
The Problem

HARASSMENT: unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetic information.

Why would this be a problem in this community?
- Power Dynamics are extreme here
- The workplace is untraditional
- The current most-used system to protect those being harassed, the whisper culture, isn’t working
- Our community is steeped in unconscious bias and is set such that white, cisgendered, heterosexual, able-bodied men are the dominant group by a larger percentage than the general population
- It’s a difficult problem to see when you’re not the one being harassed
- The evidence is anecdotal
CSWA Survey on Workplace Climate

• We recruited 426 participants for an online survey
• Questions were confined to experiences in their current and previous positions within the past 5 years only

  – We obtained IRB approval (#15354, University of Illinois) for this project
  – Thank you to those who gave their time by responding to our survey
  – The CSWA also provided funding for this project
How often do you hear the following language from your peers?

- Negative comments about religion or lack thereof:
  - Rarely: 141
  - Sometimes: 109
  - Often: 32
  - Total: 66%

- Negative remarks about mental ability/disability:
  - Rarely: 155
  - Sometimes: 77
  - Often: 9
  - Total: 58%

- Negative remarks about physical ability/disability or Transphobic remarks:
  - Rarely: 152
  - Sometimes: 74
  - Often: 28
  - Total: 57%

- Comments about not acting “feminine enough” or Sexist remarks:
  - Rarely: 135
  - Sometimes: 61
  - Often: 45
  - Total: 49%

- Racist remarks:
  - Rarely: 161
  - Sometimes: 55
  - Often: 45
  - Total: 52%

- Homophobic remarks:
  - Rarely: 159
  - Sometimes: 29
  - Often: 22
  - Total: 45%
How often do you hear the following language from your SUPERVISOR?

- **Negatives comments about religion or lack thereof**
  - Rarely: 68
  - Sometimes: 32
  - Often: 0
  - Total: 25%

- **Negative remarks about mental ability/disability**
  - Rarely: 63
  - Sometimes: 31
  - Often: 0
  - Total: 24%

- **Negative remarks about physical ability/disability or**
  - Rarely: 68
  - Sometimes: 20
  - Often: 0
  - Total: 22%

- **Transphobic remarks**
  - Rarely: 23
  - Sometimes: 0
  - Often: 0
  - Total: 6%

- **Comments about not acting “feminine enough” or**
  - Rarely: 52
  - Sometimes: 27
  - Often: 0
  - Total: 20%

- **Sexist remarks**
  - Rarely: 105
  - Sometimes: 67
  - Often: 0
  - Total: 44%

- **Racist remarks**
  - Rarely: 69
  - Sometimes: 0
  - Often: 0
  - Total: 20%

- **Homophobic remarks**
  - Rarely: 33
  - Sometimes: 0
  - Often: 0
  - Total: 10%
In your current position, how often have you been VERBALLY harassed because of the following characteristics?

- Religion or Lack Thereof: Rarely 29, Sometimes 16
- Gender (Female, Male, or Non-binary): Rarely 81, Sometimes 48
- Gender Identity (Cisgender or Transgender): Rarely 1, Sometimes 5
- Sexual Orientation: Rarely 17
- Mental Disability Status: Rarely 6
- Physical Disability Status: Rarely 1
- Race or Ethnicity: Rarely 19, Sometimes 12

Total: 426

- Rarely: 11%
- Sometimes: 57%
- Often: 1%
- 5%
- 2%
- 8%
In your current position, how often have you been PHYSICALLY harassed because of the following characteristics?

- Religion or Lack Thereof: <1%
- Gender Identity: 0%
- Sexual Orientation: 1%
- Mental Disability Status: <1%
- Physical Disability Status: <1%
- Race or Ethnicity: 1%

Gender: Rarely 27, Sometimes 8, Often 426 Total

Legend:
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
What group(s) was the individual(s) that PHYSICALLY harassed you a member of?

- Peers within Physics/Astronomy Department or Organization/Institution: 15
- Peers outside of the Physics/Astronomy Department or Organization/Institution: 11
- Supervisors within the Physics/Astronomy Department or Organization/Institution: 13
- Supervisors outside of the Physics/Astronomy Department or Organization/Institution: 4
- College/University/Organization/Institution Administration: 2
- Non-Academic Staff (Secretaries, Support Staff, etc.): 3
- Non-University/Organization/Institution Affiliated or Surrounding Community Member: 7
In your current position, do you feel or have you ever felt unsafe because of any of the following personal characteristics?

- Race or Ethnicity: 20% (20 respondents)
- Physical Disability Status: 8% (8 respondents)
- Mental Disability Status: 11% (11 respondents)
- Sexual Orientation: 10% (10 respondents)
- Gender Identity: 10% (10 respondents)
- Gender: 102% (102 respondents)
- Religion or Lack Thereof: 23% (23 respondents)

Total respondents: 211
In your current position, how many classes/meetings/conferences/field work/opportunities/etc. have you skipped per month because of feeling unsafe?

- **Student**: 2 (6 or more), 1 (4 to 5), 3 (2 to 3), 11 (1 to 2)
- **Staff scientist/Research scientist/Non-tenured professor/or Equivalent**: 3 (6 or more), 7 (4 to 5)
- **Sr. Staff scientist/Sr. Research scientist/Tenured professor/or Equivalent**: 2 (6 or more), 1 (4 to 5), 8 (2 to 3)
- **Postdoc**: 2 (6 or more), 4 (2 to 3)
- **Other (please specify)**: 2 (1 to 2)
Survey Preliminary Conclusions

• Scientists in the astronomical and planetary science communities experience and witness inappropriate language, verbal harassment, and physical assault.

• Abuses that relate to gender are those that appear in the greatest proportion in this sample.

• Inappropriate comments, harassment, and assault lead to a number of scientists feeling unsafe in their workplaces, and pursuing fewer scholarly opportunities as a direct result of these experiences.
The Solution

The problem is **HARASSMENT**

Why is a solution needed? And why should we be the community to fix this greater societal issue?

- Human Decency
- Because it’s 2015
- Because we’re currently in the spotlight and forefront of this issue
- Because we’re some of the most intelligent people of the planet and we can do better
- Because we brag about wanting to be diverse and inclusive
- Because the science in this field is being directly impacted

**HUMAN DECENCY!**
How to Make it STOP: Reporting

- Read the policy for your university, facility, or business to know what to do
- Document issues
- Write a statement or give a testimony to the Office noted in policy
- Efforts will be made as much as possible to ensure privacy in the issue
- At no point is the person, university, workplace, etc. allowed to retaliate against a harassment complaint
  - If the person becomes intimidating or threatening in any way, report to the proper authorities (campus security, police)
- Talk to someone
While at The DPS

- The Anti-Harassment Statement of the AAS:
  “Any individual covered by this policy, http://aas.org/policies/anti-harassment-policy, who believes that he or she has been subjected to harassment should contact the AAS Executive Officer or other Society Officer. Other Society Officers include the President, past President or President-elect, senior Vice Presidents, Secretary and Treasurer. He or she is not required or expected to discuss the concern with the alleged offender. All complaints will be treated seriously and be investigated promptly. Confidentiality will be honored to the extent permitted as long as the rights of others are not compromised.”

Andy Rivkin, DPS Treasurer
Anne Verbiscer, DPS Secretary
Jason Barnes, DPS Vice-Chair
Bonnie Buratti, DPS Chair

Kevin Marvel, AAS Executive Officer
How to Make it STOP:
Accountability

- **EVERYONE** here can work within their universities, departments, sub-fields, and professional societies to discuss what they can do to provide a safe, inclusive environment that is conducive to our scientists being able to do the best science possible, as a group of the best people possible.


![Dara Norman](image1.jpg)  ![Jack Burns](image2.jpg)  ![Christine Jones](image3.jpg)
How to Make it STOP: Being an ‘Ally’

Ally

Verb: 1. Combine or unite a resource or commodity with (another) for mutual benefit. 2. Side with or support (someone or something).

Allyship is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people. (https://theantioppressionnetwork.wordpress.com/allyship/)

Allyship is about understanding that you don’t know everything, have not lived every experience, and cannot fully ever understand what another person is experiencing, yet you can respect their experiences.
Additional Resources

- Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy’s Anti-Harassment page: http://www.aas.org/cswa/harassment.html
- Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy’s Unofficial Blog: http://womeninastronomy.blogspot.com
- Committee on the Status of Minorities in Astronomy’s Unofficial Blog: http://astronomyincolor.blogspot.com
- Resources when all else fails: http://www.aauw.org/resource/sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace-additional-resources/
- Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network page on Sexual Harassment: https://rainn.org/get-information/types-of-sexual-assault/sexual-harassment
- 10 Things All ‘Allies’ Need to Know by Jamie Utt: http://everydayfeminism.com/2013/11/things-allies-need-to-know/
- How to Be an Ally: https://theantioppressionnetwork.wordpress.com/allyship/

Be the change