



# The Society for the Study of Social Problems

Publishers of the Journal *Social Problems*

901 McClung Tower University of Tennessee Knoxville, TN 37996-0490  
Phone: 865-689-1531 Fax: 865-689-1534 E-mail: [sssp@utk.edu](mailto:sssp@utk.edu)  
[www.sssp1.org](http://www.sssp1.org)

## OFFICERS (2018-2019)

**Nancy J. Mezey, Ph.D.**  
Monmouth University  
*President*

**Heather Dalmage, Ph.D.**  
Roosevelt University  
*President-Elect*

**Luis A. Fernandez, Ph.D.**  
Northern Arizona University  
*Past-President*

**William D. Cabin, Ph.D.**  
Temple University  
*Vice-President*

**Daina Cheyenne Harvey, Ph.D.**  
College of the Holy Cross  
*Vice-President-Elect*

**Glenn W. Muschert, Ph.D.**  
Miami University  
*Secretary*

**Susan M. Carlson, Ph.D.**  
Western Michigan University  
*Treasurer*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Sarah Jane Brubaker, Ph.D. (2019)**  
Virginia Commonwealth University

**Claire M. Renzetti, Ph.D. (2019)**  
University of Kentucky

**Maralee Mayberry, Ph.D. (2020)**  
University of South Florida

**Fernando I. Rivera, Ph.D. (2020)**  
University of Central Florida

**Yvonne A. Braun, Ph.D. (2021)**  
University of Oregon

**Matthew W. Hughey, Ph.D. (2021)**  
University of Connecticut

**Debbie A. Potter, Ph.D. (2021)**  
University of Louisville

**Maria D. Duenas, Student (2019)**  
University of California, Merced

**Apoorva Ghosh, Student (2020)**  
University of California, Irvine

**Kristen M. Budd, Ph.D. (2021)**  
Miami University  
*Ex-Officio, Chairperson, Council of the Divisions*

**Annulla Linders, Ph.D. (2021)**  
University of Cincinnati  
*Co-Editor of Social Problems*

**Earl Wright II, Ph.D. (2021)**  
University of Cincinnati  
*Co-Editor of Social Problems*

## EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.**  
University of La Verne

## ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

**Michele Smith Koontz**  
University of Tennessee  
*Administrative Officer & Meeting Manager*

**Rachel Cogburn**  
University of Tennessee  
*Information Technology Specialist*

**Caitlin Mize**  
University of Tennessee  
*Graduate Research Associate & Webmaster*

October 31, 2018

President Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Secretary Azar,

We, the Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), one of the oldest and most respected professional social science organizations in the country, wish to add our voices to those opposed to the proposal by the Department of Health and Human Services that seeks to define gender as simply female or male, or as a biological, immutable condition determined by genitalia at birth. Research in the social sciences, supported by medical professions, reveals that both sex and gender are varied, fluid, and mutable over the course of people's lives. (If you would like the citations referenced in this letter, we will be more than happy to provide them.) When sex categories gain social and cultural meaning, they become gender categories. Gender categories can be complicated, but that does not make them less real or important. While there are multiple gender categories and identities that fall under the umbrella term "transgender," transgender refers principally to anyone who is not comfortable with the gender role assigned to them at birth or who has a gender identity that does not coincide with the labels "man" or "woman" placed on them by formal authorities. Recent estimates suggest that nearly 1.5 million people in the United States are transgender. Denying or ignoring this research and the reality of gender fluidity puts at risk the economic, social, and psychological well-being of millions of people and their loved ones.

Any changes to limit the definition of gender will negatively impact transgender people, their families, their teachers, and their coworkers. For example, in the case of transgender students in grades K-12, according to one study, 78 percent reported being harassed, 3 percent reported being physically assaulted, and 12

percent reported experiencing sexual violence due to discrimination. In addition to the struggles of transgender children, transgender adults are four times more likely than the general population to live in extreme poverty. Transgender people are more likely to contemplate and commit suicide than the general population. Transgender people experience twice the unemployment rate of the general population, with transgender people of color experiencing up to four times the national unemployment rate. The list of negative repercussions from denying people's gender identity is a lengthy one, including increased homelessness, use of drinking and drugs, and health risks. *Despite* this discrimination and other forms of mistreatment, according to another study, nearly 80 percent of individuals who transitioned from one gender to another, reported feeling more comfortable and being more productive at work. In other words, when people are allowed to live in the gendered ways that they see fit, they live more fulfilling, happier, healthier, and more productive lives. This benefits all of society and strengthens our social and cultural fabric. Laws and policies should always serve to unite, not divide us, especially at a time that our country is as divided as it is.

We therefore strongly encourage you *not* to put forth, advocate for, or support any proposals that limits the definition of sex or gender, and instead allow individuals to define their own gender identities, so that they too can benefit from all of the opportunities, rights, and privileges that our country affords its members.

Sincerely,



Nancy J. Mezey, Ph.D.  
SSSP President, 2018-2019



William Cabin, Ph.D.  
SSSP Vice-President, 2018-2019



Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.  
SSSP Executive Officer