

SSSP Statement and Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment

As a social justice organization, the SSSP is committed to creating a safe and welcoming space at the annual meeting for the free exchange of ideas and professional development; an environment free from harassment based on, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity or gender expression, national origin, age, disability, health conditions, sexual orientation, religion, language, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status. This includes the harassment of colleagues, students, guests, SSSP and hotel staff, vendors, exhibitors, and others present at the annual meeting. To that end, we ask you to help us make it very clear that anyone engaging in this kind of behavior is not welcomed at the annual meeting. (The Society also has a Sexual Harassment Workplace Policy, listing numerous examples of sexual harassment, in the Operations Manual, for members to consult if they wish.)

The following is a statement and policy against discrimination and harassment from our Operations Manual.

The Society for the Study of Social Problems is committed to the eradication of discrimination (both intentional and unintentional), harassment, intimidation, and violence directed at individuals and groups based on, but not limited to, race and ethnicity, sex, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, class, nationality and immigrant status, ability, and religion. Offensive and prohibited conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets, name calling, physical assaults and threats, unwanted touching and persistent unwanted attention and invasion of personal space, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, and insults and put-downs. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is engaged in without clear affirmative consent. Discriminatory and harassing actions are prohibited both when they are directed at specific individuals and groups and when they create a hostile environment.

Sexual harassment and sexual assault disproportionately target people subject to structural oppression: women; people of color; trans, and gender non-conforming individuals; and disabled people, although anyone can be a victim.

Whenever and wherever possible, the Society will affirm this commitment to publicly and explicitly combat racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and antisemitism. As an organization dedicated to social justice, the Society will take very seriously, reports, formal or informal, of harassment or discrimination in the organization and at annual and other Society meetings. To the greatest degree possible, the Society will do what it can to respond appropriately to those who violate our policies and to protect victims and potential victims, from being subjected to this type of unwanted and offensive behavior. We will make every effort to ensure that this commitment is manifest in the policies, programs, and practices of the organization, including in the public positions the SSSP takes on issues, both national and international. SSSP expressly prohibits retaliation against individuals who report harassment and will take action against those who retaliate.

This policy addresses harassment that involves SSSP members in general and includes specific guidelines for harassment that occurs at SSSP annual meetings, events (virtual or in-person), email and phone communications regarding SSSP business, and on SSSP social media platforms.

When posts on SSSP accounts are flagged within the platform by other SSSP members, the administrative office will take down such posts and send them to the Anti-Harassment Committee for review and follow-up, which may include the resolutions, outcomes, and possible sanctions outlined in the Anti-Harassment Policy, or other responses deemed appropriate by the Committee. To this end, we encourage SSSP members to be mindful when posting to SSSP social media accounts and consider the ways people different from them might interpret their messages.

By joining SSSP, members of SSSP agree to comply with this policy.

If you witness an incident and can help *without placing yourself or anyone else in danger*, we encourage you to do so. If you or someone is in imminent physical danger, we urge you to alert hotel security and/or law enforcement. Otherwise, attendees are encouraged to report possible instances of harassment to the Executive Officer, Elroi J. Windsor or Anti-Harassment Committee Chair, Sarah Jane Brubaker at ewindsor@westga.edu, sbrubaker@vcu.edu.

Roles, Responsibility and Authority

Anti-Harassment Committee

Per the By-laws, the Anti-Harassment Committee shall consist of six members of the Society. Three members will be elected by the voting membership and three members will be appointed by the President, one of whom will be appointed to chair the committee. Each member will serve a three-year term with the terms staggered so that at least two members are elected each year. In addition to the elected and appointed members, the Executive Officer shall serve as an ex officio member.

The Committee reviews the policy and its enforcement on an annual basis and recommends revisions as appropriate. The Committee also selects and approves the External Consultant.

Anti-Harassment Committee Chair

Per the By-laws, the Chair should have expertise in the area of gender violence or related areas and preferably be a member of the Board of Directors.

The Chair receives and reviews reports of policy violations, meets with those considering making a report to discuss reporting options and processes and to provide support or referrals for resources, and receives the report from External Consultant once investigation is completed and shares it with the SSSP President and Executive Officer.

Ombudsperson

The Ombudsperson is external to SSSP and compensated for their time. This individual meets with those considering making a report to discuss reporting options and processes and to provide support or resources.

External Consultant

The External Consultant is not a member of SSSP, but is selected and approved by the Anti-Harassment Committee and is compensated for their time. They should have experience responding to and investigating harassment claims within organizations.

Executive Officer (EO)

The Executive Officer receives reports of policy violations, reaches out to those accused to address the

violation without launching an investigation, approves recommended sanctions from the External Consultant, and serves on the Ad-hoc Appeals Committee.

SSSP President

The SSSP President responds to reports made during meetings (together with the Anti-Harassment Committee Chair and EO), approves recommended sanctions from the External Consultant, and serves on the Ad-hoc Appeals Committee.

Ad-hoc Appeals Committee

This committee is a subcommittee comprised of the SSSP President, Past-President, President-Elect and Executive Officer and reviews and responds to appeals made regarding the External Consultant's report/findings/sanctions.

Advocate

The advocate is a volunteer member of SSSP who is available to support those making a report by providing information and resources.

*The Executive Officer, Anti-Harassment Committee Chair, SSSP Presidents, and others involved in reviewing and responding to reports are required to disclose any conflicts of interest or the appearance of any conflicts of interest, and will be recused from reviewing and responding to those cases.

I. General violations of the anti-harassment policy.

Reporting

Reports of policy violations, including retaliation, can be made via email at SSSPAHC@utk.edu or to the Executive Officer, Elroi J. Windsor or Anti-Harassment Committee Chair, Sarah Jane Brubaker at ewindsor@westga.edu, sbrubaker@vcu.edu.

Anonymous Reporting

Individuals who would like to share information regarding their experience with or knowledge of a policy violation without sharing their identity can do so via the online anonymous reporting option. Reports may address specific violations by individuals or general violations that may have created or could create a hostile climate or culture. Individuals may select both the type of violation and the recipient (i.e. the full Anti-Harassment Committee, Chair of the Committee or the President/EO). <https://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageId/1440>

Confidential Reporting

Individuals who wish to make a confidential report and have experienced a violation of the anti-harassment policy have the following options. Each is facilitated through the Anti-Harassment Committee Chair or EO:

1. Request a confidential consultation with the Anti-Harassment Committee Chair/Ombudsperson with a request for resources, information about reporting/resolution options, and other types of support. Such a request can be made whether the alleged harassment took place during a SSSP meeting or not. The ombudsperson can help the individual decide what to do and how to do it, including, for example, helping them file a complaint at their home institution, where the harassment occurred, if that is the action they want to take after discussing their options with the ombudsperson.

2. Make a confidential report to the Anti-Harassment Committee Chair/Ombudsperson with a request for screening/review and recommendation for resolution [e.g. through a mediated meeting with parties, where the EO or committee chair reaches out to the accused party] with the option, but without obligation, to file a formal report.
3. Make a formal confidential report to an External Consultant through referral from the Committee Chair or EO with a request for an investigation/fact-finding with possible sanctioning of the accused party. This option will move the report to a formal investigation.

Support Services/Advocacy

Those requesting consultation or making a report will be provided with resources for trauma-informed support.

What to Include in a Formal Report

A complaint/report should include, to the extent possible, the following information:

1) the name and contact information of the complainant; 2) the name and contact information of the subject of the complaint; 3) a statement that other legal or institutional proceedings involving the alleged conduct have not been initiated or, if initiated, the status of such proceedings; 4) a full description of the conduct alleged to have violated the anti-harassment policy, including the sources of all information on which the allegations are based; 5) copies of any documents supporting the allegations; 6) names and contact information of potential witnesses/references.

Investigation/Fact-Finding

The investigation process will apply to reports of harassment that takes place during the annual meeting, the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee Mid-Year meeting, and online committee and Board meetings/discussions. Reports may also include cases where an institution or legal authorities have investigated and found that a member has engaged in sexual or other form of harassment and the SSSP is being asked to act in response to those findings.

Reports that move to this stage regarding harassment that takes place at SSSP events will be investigated by an External Consultant with professional experience and expertise in handling harassment cases. The accused party will be notified of the charges and given an opportunity to respond. Each party's statement will be shared with the other. Both parties may provide contact information for individuals to serve as witnesses/references.

Reports that relate to incidents that have taken place outside of SSSP events, including those that have been investigated externally, will be reviewed by the Anti-Harassment committee and considered for specific action. The committee may consult with its own investigator, legal consultant, or others in making its decision.

Timeframe

Reports (other than those addressing violations occurring during the annual meeting) will be acknowledged within 48 hours and responded to within 60 days.

Resolution, Outcomes and Possible Sanctions

The consultant will keep a written record of the process and submit a written final report to the Executive Officer and SSSP President that will be shared with both parties.

Potential outcomes include the following:

1. **Negative/Inconclusive Finding:** In the event that the consultant's finding is inconclusive or negative, the Anti-Harassment Committee Chair will convey this to the Executive Officer and the SSSP President, who will inform both parties of the finding in writing.
2. **Finding of Policy Violation:** In the event that the consultant finds that harassment has occurred (and has determined the appropriate sanctions), the Anti-Harassment Committee Chair will convey the finding and the sanctions in writing in the form of a recommendation to be approved by the Executive Officer (or a staff member designated by the EO) and the SSSP President, who will inform both parties of the finding and sanctions in writing.

Based on a finding of policy violation, potential sanctions may include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

- immediate removal from a meeting or event without notice or refund
- prohibiting participation in society events
- revoking membership or removal from leadership positions
- rescinding awards
- barring from future events and/or leadership positions
- report to appropriate legal authority/home institution

Appeal

Either party may appeal the findings of the investigation within 30 days of receiving the report. Appeals will be made to an Ad-hoc Appeals Committee consisting of the SSSP President, Past President, President-Elect (chaired by the Past President), and Executive Officer. Grounds for appeal include a claim of procedural error, substantive or significant new evidence, evidence of the use of impermissible criteria, or evidence of bias in the treatment of the fact-finding and decision process.

Policy Updates and Approval

This policy and its enforcement will be reviewed by the Anti-Harassment Committee on an annual basis and updated/amended with the Board's approval as deemed necessary and appropriate.

II. Violations of the anti-harassment policy at annual meeting and other SSSP events.

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A particular form of sexual harassment is sexual assault, which includes actual or attempted physical attacks and any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient.

Importantly, certain situations and circumstances escalate harassing behavior and/or language including power imbalances (e.g. graduate student/mentor, during an interview, etc.) and social events that may or may not involve alcohol consumption.

Reporting

If you witness an incident and can help *without placing yourself or anyone else in danger*, we encourage you to do so. If you or someone is in imminent physical danger, we urge you to alert hotel security and/or law enforcement. Otherwise, attendees are encouraged to report possible instances of harassment to the Executive Officer, Elroi J. Windsor or Anti-Harassment Committee Chair, Sarah Jane Brubaker at ewindsor@westga.edu, sbrubaker@vcu.edu.

Those making a report regarding behavior at a meeting can request that the person violating the policy be contacted by the Executive Officer and asked to avoid contact with the individual reporting the violation, or to leave the meeting altogether. Reports received during annual meetings will be responded to within 2 hours.

Given the compressed timing of the meetings, an investigation of the report may be conducted by the Executive Office, SSSP President, and Anti-Harassment Committee Chair, so that immediate response and action are possible.