

Department of Sociology Equity and Justice Policy

Our department values and prioritizes respect for all members of the sociology community across all settings—including in classes, meetings, and departmental events. Discrimination, harassment of any kind, bullying, and microaggressions marginalize community members and hinder the learning climate. While everyone has a role to play in creating a positive learning environment, as sociologists we are aware that structural and power dynamics shape this process. We don't expect affected parties to take on the burden of addressing inequities in the department. Faculty in particular set the tone for a positive departmental climate. Our departmental values lead us to question and challenge language or actions that discriminate against or alienate members of our community.

All members of our community should abide by the following policy:

Be excellent to each other, be inclusive, be considerate, be respectful. Participate while acknowledging that everyone deserves to be here and each of us has the right to enjoy our experience without fear of harassment, discrimination, or condescension, whether blatant or via microaggressions. Jokes should not demean others. Be empathetic, consider what you are saying and doing and how it would feel if it were said to or about you. We should recognize how power differentials inherent in our positions impact the ways in which we react to and interpret interactions.

The following represent our guiding values for a positive departmental climate:

- Respect for the dignity and worth of all individuals;
- Open-minded consideration of ideas, perspectives and beliefs that challenge our thinking;
- Enthusiasm, discovery, innovation and critical thinking;
- Professionalism, honesty and integrity in performance of our responsibilities;
- Accountability for actions, resources, and relationships;
- Transparency in decision-making processes that shape priorities and initiatives;
- Support for [transformative](#) and [restorative](#) approaches to equity and justice concerns;
- Collaboration and cooperation

Putting our Values into Action

We are one team, but we represent many ideas, experiences, and backgrounds. We embrace a culture that promotes both individual creativity and teamwork, that recognizes and supports each contribution, that honors mutual trust and respect, and that constantly strives for excellence.

Conduct: Members will act with honesty and be personally accountable for individual actions; will conscientiously fulfill obligations of their position; are expected to treat others with courtesy, respect, equity and fairness; and will foster a culturally competent and inclusive environment.

Equitable Division of Labor: Members should endeavor to avoid inequitable situations where one person is responsible for a greater collective share of mentoring, advising, and department committee work than another. Everyone has the responsibility to be involved in the department and it is inequitable when individuals do not contribute in some way.

Integrity: Members are expected to take responsibility for the integrity of their contributions to all professional activities and interactions.

Acknowledgement: Members will acknowledge the names and roles of those who made contributions to unit activities, work products, and achievements.

Community Settings: Members are responsible for creating and promoting safe, open, and productive environments for learning and working. Community settings honor privacy and confidentiality and are characterized by integrity, respect, fairness, trustworthiness, and transparency.

Student/Advisor Relationship: The relationship between students and their advisors is a unique one in the academic environment. In addition to the responsibilities outlined in this section for the respectful treatment of all individuals, members should be sensitive to the power imbalance in the student/advisor relationship, and aware of responsibilities of the advisor, the student, and the institution in regards to this relationship.

Adherence to Law and Policies: Members are expected to be aware of and adhere to laws, university policies, and this Equity and Justice Policy in their professional and educational roles.

Misconduct: Members will not engage in discrimination, harassment, bullying, dishonesty, fraud, misrepresentation, coercive manipulation, censorship, or other misconduct. This applies to all professional, research, and teaching environments and to conduct both on- and off-campus. The following are types of misconduct that violate Department standards of behavior. These are not legal definitions but cultural expectations about our community. There will be gray areas and differing interpretations of some of these behaviors and the **Grievance Policy** is intended to help navigate these gray areas. Legal definitions on these terms are available [here](#).

- **Discrimination** (explicit or implicit, intentional or unintentional) means unfair treatment in professional opportunities, education, benefits, evaluation, and employment as well as retaliation and various types of harassment.
- **Harassment** is a type of discrimination that involves actions, words or physical gestures that could reasonably be perceived to be the cause of another person's distress or discomfort, or which put the safety of the individual at risk. This includes all behaviors

that are unwanted by the recipient that have the purpose or effect of violating the recipient's dignity, marginalizing an individual either personally or professionally, or which create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It applies not only to direct interactions, but also other forms of communication including social media.

- **Sexual harassment** includes any unwanted and/or inappropriate sexual remarks or physical advances, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments, and the University of Maryland Policy and Procedures on Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Misconduct.
- **Bullying** is the repeated use of force, threat, or coercion to abuse, intimidate, or purposefully dominate others in the professional or educational environment based on a real or perceived power imbalance. These actions can include abusive criticism, humiliation, the spreading of rumors, physical and verbal attacks, isolation, undermining, threats on withholding educational benefits or recommendations made by individuals with decision-making authority about benefits and recommendations, and professional or educational exclusion of individuals through any means.
- **Microaggressions** are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their group membership. These messages may invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of targets, marginalize or demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment.

Prosocial Bystander Intervention: Research shows that the more people there are in a group, the less likely a person will offer aid to victims. This policy protects members who engage in bystander interventions when aware of misconduct or suspected misconduct including discrimination, harassment, bullying, or other behaviors that violate our guiding values. Details regarding prosocial bystander interventions are available [here](#) and [here](#).

Reporting: Members have a responsibility to appropriately and promptly report misconduct they witness or of which they become aware. Additional information on reporting is included in the **Grievance Policy**.