

July 11, 2024



Dear Drs. Correll and Ray,

Sociologists for Trans Justice (S4TJ) would like to expand on Dr. Tey Meadow's letter expressing concern regarding the recent inclusion of advertising for Doriane Lambelet Coleman's book, *On Sex and Gender: A Commonsense Approach*. Dr. Meadow states, "My sense is that ASA as an organization does not believe that transgender exclusion is common sense." We strongly agree and urge ASA to remove this title from advertising and to include additional safeguards to verify scholarship prior to commercial advertising.

Sociology, and ASA as a professional organization, has a history of being exclusionary to diverse and critical scholarship. From its inception, where W.E.B. du Bois was excluded because he was Black, ASA has wielded its power to reproduce social inequalities. More recently though, ASA and its leadership have ostensibly worked hard to fight these power structures.

Of the data available, there is about 1% of ASA membership who are transgender, nonbinary, or gender nonconforming. We have relatively less power within the organization, despite transgender people being central to multiple major theoretical advancements within sociology.

Actively supporting Doriane Lambelet Coleman through the dissemination of her work in ASA communications creates a hostile space for the small number of transgender and gender non-conforming scholars, going against ASA's commitment to diversity. Support of anti-trans scholarship is in opposition to prior public support for transgender students. We find this scholar's professional and public work disrespectful and an attack on transgender people's rights and dignity. We believe this scholar is harming the human rights of transgender people, including transgender scholars, and is thus using her professional identity to serve her personal opinion rather than the public good. This scholar has not ensured appropriate research is represented in her work. The advertisement of this scholar's work, thus, violates the ASA Code of Ethics, which reads:

Principle D: Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity. Sociologists respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people. They strive to eliminate bias in their professional activities, and they do not tolerate any forms of discrimination based on age, gender, race, socioeconomic status and socioeconomic origins, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, health conditions, political affiliation, marital status, domestic status, parental status, or any other applicable basis proscribed by law. They are sensitive to cultural, individual, and role differences in serving, teaching, and studying groups of people with distinctive characteristics. In all of their work related activities, sociologists acknowledge the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own.

Principle E: Social Responsibility. Sociologists are aware of their professional and scientific responsibility to the communities and societies in which they live and work. They apply and make

public their knowledge in order to contribute to the public good. When undertaking research, they strive to advance the science of Sociology and to serve the public good. At the same time, sociologists strive to be aware of situations that may result in harm to individuals, groups or communities.

Principle F: Human Rights. In the course of their research, teaching, practice, and service, sociologists are committed to professional behaviors consistent with promoting the human rights of all people, including other sociologists. In their professional lives, sociologists strive to use their knowledge and skills to advance the cause of human rights worldwide¹.

As Tey Meadow notes, by advertising this work and supporting this scholar publicly, ASA has made this space unwelcoming to its transgender, gender nonconforming, nonbinary, and intersex members. If ASA values dismantling power inequalities, then the organization should see how power inequalities have silenced and harmed countless trans people, including students and scholars within the discipline.

In 2017, then ASA president Michèle Lamont sent a letter to the office of former president Trump expressing support for transgender students to use sex segregated facilities that align with their professed gender². In this statement, ASA has already taken a stand that is in opposition to that which this author puts forth. Further, the ASA Diversity Statement explicitly commits to “empowering a diverse membership with an equitable and welcoming environment for all.”³ Thus, removing this book from advertisements would be in alignment with previous ASA action, the ASA code of conduct, and the ASA diversity statement.

At a minimum, we ask that this scholar’s work be removed from official ASA communications. We understand the importance of academic freedom, including dissenting or differing points of view, however we do not feel this outweighs the importance of protecting marginalized people. Sociology has used its power in the past to reproduce these and other views that we now find to be preposterous, and we ask that the organization work to support its small, yet important transgender scholars.

Sociology has come under fire for its general stance on issues of transgender rights and understanding gender as a social construct with power imbalances. Now is not the time to stay silent on these issues.

Sincerely,

Sociologists for Trans Justice

¹ https://www.asanet.org/wp-content/uploads/asa_code_of_ethics-june2018a.pdf

² https://www.asanet.org/wp-content/uploads/transgender_letter_to_trump.pdf

³ <https://www.asanet.org/about/governance-and-leadership/diversity-statement/>