

## Sexual Orientation and Transgender Issues in Organizations

Edited by Kollen T.

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Sexual orientation and gender identity diversity have traditionally been understudied in the mainstream management and organization literature, even in the diversity management literature (e.g. Ragins, 2004; Pichler, 2007). That said, sexual orientation and gender identity diversity have received increased attention from scholars in recent years. For instance, a forthcoming special issue of the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* has been dedicated to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) workers; the most recent version of the *Oxford Handbook of Workplace Discrimination* included a chapter on LGBT workers (Pichler and Ruggs, in press); and articles on sexual orientation and gender identity diversity are increasingly common in the management (e.g. Ragins, 2008) and diversity literatures (e.g. Hebl *et al.*, 2016). There is also an increased focus on both social and economic imperatives of LGBT-supportive policies (King and Cortina, 2010), including positive stock market reactions (Wang and Schwarz, 2010), financial performance, and corporate social responsibility (Pichler *et al.*, in press).

*Sexual Orientation and Transgender Issues in Organizations*, edited by Thomas Kollen, is accordingly quite timely. Not only is it timely, it is comprehensive: the book includes some 33 chapters on a wide range of issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity in organizations. Kollen posits that the book is itself a critique of the use of the term “LGBT” in the scholarly literature in the sense that the term artificially collapses distinct identities and experiences among different sexual and gender identity minorities. The book achieves its critique, in my estimation, by including chapters that consider issues specifically related to the different experiences of LGBT workers. In fact, there are 11 chapters on transgender issues in organizations. There is also a chapter specifically devoted to the career experiences of bisexual workers. The remaining chapters cover a variety of topics, such as the gender binary, heterosexism, sexual orientation and gender identity inclusivity, coming out as trans, among other topics.

The chapters reflect scholarly topics and frames that are prominent in the diversity management literature, from microaggressions to inclusion, and almost any topic one could think of related to sexual orientation and gender identity diversity in organizations is covered in this extensive volume. That said, there were no chapters devoted to a business case for supporting LGBT workers – or to related issues such as diversity strategy or performance outcomes of LGBT-supportive policies. What seems to be missing from the book, at a high level, is a strategic or integrated perspective. The chapters offer a variety of important implications for practitioners and organizations, but the book does not start from a place of linking policies, practices or recommendations to higher-level organizational issues, such as organizational culture, structure or strategy. Moreover, the chapters in the book are not really tied together by an over-arching structure or set of integrated conclusions.



Given that there are several chapters specifically on transgender issues in organizations, there are a variety of related topics covered, such as the gender binary, coming out as trans, sex reassignment surgery, transitioning, transgender rights, intersexuality, among others. Although the editor points out in the forward that both transgender and cisgender perspectives are represented, one of the limitations of the book, and of the scholarly literature more broadly, is that the perspectives and experiences of those in the majority, i.e., heterosexual and cisgender individuals, are very much underrepresented. If we are to better understand a broad spectrum of LGBT issues in organizations, including allyship for instance, it is important to understand these issues not only from different populations of sexual and gender identity minorities, but also from the perspective of those in the majority (see Pichler *et al.*, 2017). That said, some chapters discuss perspectives of sexual or gender identity majority members. For instance, Sawyer *et al.* discuss the challenges coworkers experience with transgender identities or changes in gender identity. An additional area in need of development is intersectionality (see Sawyer *et al.*, 2013). The editor notes that sexual orientation and gender identity are separate constructs, which is important. It would be useful to understand how, for instance, the transitioning process differs across individuals of different sexual orientations – as well as different genders, races, and other characteristics, such as religious beliefs.

A key feature of this book is that many of the chapters study LGBT issues from the perspective of a particular country. As the title of the book denotes, this is truly a study of LGBT issues from a global perspective, which is a key feature and contribution of the book. A variety of countries from across the globe are included, such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, India, Pakistan, Poland, Spain, Thailand, and the USA. The book is also global in the sense that authors too were from as many countries. Many of the issues discussed in the chapters are brought to life with useful examples. For instance, the chapter on coming out as transgender in India by Bahadur and Kumar includes the story of Arjun, his confusion about the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity in childhood, and later his transition and coming out as trans in the workplace. The chapter by Ozeren *et al.* includes a variety of quotes from their qualitative study from employees coming out in Turkish workplaces. Galupo and Resnick also offer illuminating quotes from LGBT workers about their experiences with microaggressions. Reading the book is made more interesting and pleasurable by reading the stories of LGBT workers. I believe that everyone – including cisgender and heterosexual individuals – could benefit from reading these stories and learning more about what it is like to be a sexual or gender identity minority in general, and in a particular national or organizational context. The book is not only global, it is also multidisciplinary, including literatures ranging from religion to vocational behavior to psychology to economics. This is closely tied to the diversity in topics included in the chapters, which range from heteronormativity and the gender binary to wage discrimination.

In the foreward, Koller mentions innovative methodological approaches and heretofore unapplied theoretical frameworks are represented in the book – although it was not made clear what specific approaches or theoretical frameworks. That said, different types of workers are represented, from clergy to business schools staff to police officers. Perspectives of adult LGBT workers are included, and so too are those of younger workers; there is a chapter that focuses on the career choices of sexual minority and trans youth. A variety of methods are employed across chapters, including systematic literature reviews, case studies, quantitative and qualitative primary empirical studies, empirical studies using secondary data, mixed-method studies, and the development of new measures. Several chapters discuss methodological issues for researchers interested in studying LGBT issues in organizations. For instance, Sawyer *et al.* discuss the issue of time in studying changes in gender identity. Many chapters focus substantively on sexual orientation and gender

identity discrimination from different frames including legal, organizational and societal. The literature on LGBT workers has been criticized for lacking a multilevel perspective (e.g. Pichler and Ruggs, in press), yet many of the chapters in this volume consider topics from multiple stakeholders and levels of analysis. In fact, the study of sexual orientation disclosure and stress by Meinhold and Frohn included multilevel analyses.

Not only are academics a key audience for this book, so too are practitioners. Some chapters are specifically devoted to the implementation of LGBT-supportive policies, and others focus on related issues including workplace advocacy, labor union issues, and case studies of inclusion. Overall, the book has a lot to offer from a practical or policy-oriented perspective – both for sexual and gender identity minorities, but also to practitioners and policymakers. Many of the authors offer helpful discussions of the implications of their chapter for organizations. For instance, Sawyer *et al.* offer recommendations for creating trans-inclusive workplaces, and McFadden and Crowley-Henry discuss hiring trans workers and providing gender-appropriate bathroom facilities. Others discuss policies related to sexual orientation and gender identity not only among organizations, but among nation states as well. For instance, the chapter by Katina Sawyer *et al.*, discusses transgender discrimination and the law from a US and global perspective; Peran discusses the need for antidiscrimination legislation in Spain to shift from using the term “sex” to “gender” so as to include a broader level of protection; Hunt and Pelz discuss transgender rights from legal and other perspectives in Canada; Golebiowska discussed the legal environment for sexual minority workers in Poland; and Mennicke and Cutler-Seeber discuss laws related to trans workers in the USA.

Overall, this volume is a must-have for researchers studying sexual orientation and gender identity in organizations. It is also a must-have for practitioners of various types, including line managers, diversity managers, human resource managers and executives. It seems increasingly important for organizations to understand the consequences of effective and ineffective management of sexual orientation and gender identity diversity (Pichler *et al.*, 2017; Pichler *et al.*, in press) – and this book is a comprehensive reference in terms of studying sexual orientation and gender identity diversity as well as managing sexual orientation and gender identity diversity in organizations.

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