Section II
Examining Specific Groups and Categories

Chapter 15
Sexual Orientation
Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, readers should have a greater understanding of sexual orientation as an aspect of diversity. Readers can expect to:

- have an awareness of the experiences of sexual minorities in organizations, in particular gays and lesbians.
- be aware of similarities and differences between sexual minorities and other nondominant groups.
- consider population estimates, education, and income levels of gays and lesbians compared with heterosexual men and women.
Chapter Objectives (cont’d)

After completing this chapter, readers should have a greater understanding of sexual orientation as an aspect of diversity. Readers can expect to:

- examine misperceptions about sexual minorities at work, negative outcomes associated with being closeted, and benefits of full inclusion of sexual minorities.

- understand individual and organizational measures that can be employed to include sexual minorities as valued employees, customers, and constituents.
**Terminology**

- **Sexual Orientation**
  - The American Psychological Association defines sexual orientation as a component of sexuality “characterized by enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, and/or affectional attractions to individuals of a particular gender.”

- **Commonly-recognized Sexual Orientations**
  - Homosexual
  - Heterosexual
  - Bisexual
Terminology (cont’d)

• Sexual Minorities
  ➢ *Nonheterosexuals: gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) persons*

• Homophobia
  ➢ *The fear of homosexuals*

• Heterosexism
  ➢ *An ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual behavior, relationship, identity, or community.*
History of Gay Rights in the United States

• **Society for Human Rights**
  - The earliest known gay rights organization was formed in Chicago in 1924.

• **Mattachine Society**
  - The first national gay rights organization began in 1951.

• **Daughters of Bilitis**
  - A national lesbian organization founded in 1956.

• **Stonewall Riots in Greenwich, New York (1969)**
  - The modern beginning of the gay rights movement
Population, Education and Income Levels

• 4% to 17% of the nearly 296 million people—between 12 and 50 million people—in the United States are gay or lesbian.

• On average, gays and lesbians have higher education levels than heterosexuals.
  ➢ About a quarter of both gay men and lesbians have college degrees, compared with about 17% for heterosexual men and women.

• Lesbians appear to earn more than comparably educated heterosexual women, gay males earn less than comparably educated heterosexual men.
<table>
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<th></th>
<th>All Men</th>
<th>All Women</th>
<th>Gay Male Household</th>
<th>Lesbian Household</th>
<th>Heterosexual Household</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Average annual earnings</td>
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<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
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</tbody>
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Legislation

• No widespread, uniform federal legislation prohibits sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace.
  
  ➢ Executive Order 11478 prohibits sexual orientation discrimination in federal civilian workplaces, but has not been extended to other employers.

• Many states and cities have passed legislation prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination.

• Oncale v. Sundowner

  ➢ Supreme Court ruled that harassment may occur between people of the same sex.
Partner Benefits

• Employers’ fears of increased costs (especially costs associated with HIV/AIDS) are often expressed as reasons for not offering partner benefits.

• Few employees (less than 2%) enroll for domestic partner benefits and when they do, costs are generally consistent with any increase in the number of plan participants, instead of being proportionately higher.
HIV/AIDS at Work: Unnecessary and Unfounded Fears

- Employees resist working with or employing gay males for fear of contracting HIV/AIDS

  - HIV/AIDS is strongly perceived as a gay male disease, but it simply is not.
  
  - The risk of contracting HIV/AIDS while at work is very small.
  
  - HIV/AIDS is a protected disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and employers are prohibited from discriminating against people with HIV/AIDS.
Gays in the Military: Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue, Don’t Harass

• U.S. Military policy excludes from military service GLB who are open about their sexual orientation.

  Fears of reduced cohesion, reduced enlistment of heterosexuals, and violations of the right to privacy of heterosexual personnel are given as reasons for barring gays and lesbians from the military.
Determinants of Attitudes toward Gays and Lesbians

An Individual’s Attitudes Toward Gays and Lesbians

- Sex
- Education
- Religious Fundamentalism
- Marital Status
Out at Work?

• Many gays and lesbians expect, and often receive discrimination, harassment, or termination if they are open at work.
  
  Passing—sexual minorities avoid negative consequences of being out by not disclosing their sexual orientation.

• Benefits of being out:
  
  Higher affective commitment and job satisfaction
  View top management as being more supportive
  Lower role ambiguity, role conflict, and conflict between work and home
Individual Recommendations

• Sexual minorities should:

  ➢ Take active roles in their employment searches and careers to minimize discrimination and unfairness, and to maximize positive outcomes.

  ➢ Determine which organizations include sexual orientation in their nondiscrimination policies and offer equality in partner benefits.

  ➢ Consider using job referrals from friends and allies.

  ➢ Make conscious career choices and resist being channeled into jobs that others perceive as appropriate for gay males.
Organizational Recommendations

- **Support sexual orientation diversity by:**
  - Including sexual orientation in an organization’s nondiscrimination policy
  - Seeking top management support
  - Offering equality in benefits to domestic partners
  - Training, education, discipline and termination

- **Benefits of a supportive climate**
  - Increased commitment
  - Job satisfaction
  - Cost reduction, resource acquisition, creativity, and marketing
Key Terms

• Heterosexism
• Homophobia
• Passing
• Sexual minorities
• Sexual orientation