

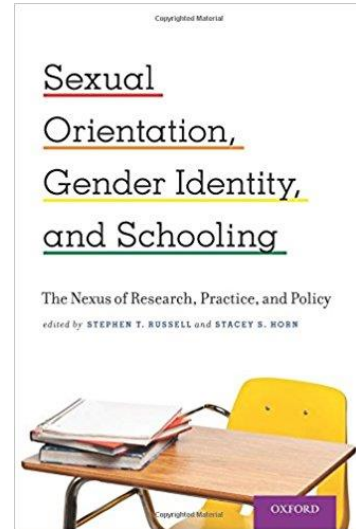
Reviewed by Stephen T. Russell and Stacey S. Horn (Eds.), **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Schooling: The Nexus of Research, Practice, and Policy**, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017, 388 pp., \$55.00 (paperback).

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In September 2016, when **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Schooling** was released, continued progress for LGBTQ rights was largely assumed in the United States. Yet, in just two months, the unexpected results of the U.S. presidential election left LGBTQ people, activists, scholars, and others in shock. What would the election of a candidate who lacked a track record on human rights issues mean for LGBTQ people? Questions about potential ramifications poured into advocacy organizations (Grindberg, 2016), while actions by the President-elect's supporters highlighted still-present homophobia and transphobia. Hate crimes across the U.S. increased by 20% during 2016, fueled by the election campaign's rhetoric (Reuters, 2017). Reports of assaults on gay men by perpetrators citing "Trump's America" came to light (CBS DC, 2017; Filosa, 2017). Suddenly, a movement marked by recent major political and social advancements, such as securing marriage equality, faced uncertainty.



In the wake of the election, attention to school climate and safety concerns facing LGBTQ youth has only increased in importance, as school environments have historically been sites of bias-based bullying. The arrival of *Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Schooling* is welcome for people concerned with the welfare of LGBTQ youth. The book offers a compilation of perspectives on policy and practice regarding the safety of school environments for LGBTQ students both in the United States and internationally. The authors' stated goal is to advance social justice related to sexual orientation and gender identity by strengthening the relationship between research, policy, and practice. All chapters are written by "scholar/advocates." The book's overarching argument is that LGBTQ youth have a right to safe schools, which has not been met, and supportive environments lead to greater achievement and well-being.

*Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Schooling* is a needed source of documentation for issues pertaining to LGBTQ students. It contains information hard to find elsewhere (e.g., a detailed history of GSAs (genders-sexualities alliances/gay-straight alliances)). In coupling the current state of knowledge on sexual orientation and gender identity issues in education with an exploration of dynamics between research, policy, and practice, the book offers an engaging overview of LGBTQ rights in schooling. Of note, the authors take on the challenging task of describing the state of such rights across the globe. While the book provides a useful review of efforts to improve school safety for LGBTQ students, it is somewhat limited in that it contains chapters focused on a number of more developed nations yet

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does not address countries in which LGBTQ rights lag most (e.g., Russia, Iran). The stories of LGBTQ students who face the most elevated challenges may be left out. However, this is understandable as research and advocacy work in such locations is especially scarce.

In terms of structure, the book first describes the landscape of current research and practice related to bullying in schools, exploring topics such as the link between school connectedness and youth health as well as strategies for bullying prevention. Then, it discusses emerging issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation in schools (e.g., LGBTQ-inclusive curricula), transitioning to an examination of systemic models of change, such as policies for transforming educational institutions. Next, it provides an overview of advocacy efforts and community organizing related to school safety. Finally, it ties together connections between research, practice, and policy.

The book is at its best when illuminating underexplored stories and histories. For example, a chapter titled, "From 'Dignity' to 'Success': Using Strategic Communications to Change Policies and Perspectives," traces efforts in California to implement LGBTQ-inclusive classroom curricula. The authors note how focus groups revealed parental concerns that teaching about LGBTQ historical figures would necessarily entail classroom discussion about sexual practices. As such, advocates can benefit from using research strategies to ensure they understand their target audiences and share messages that meet the needs of people able to shape and enforce school policies. The need for strategic communication is bolstered by an overview of persuasion research (Kahneman, 2011) and brought to life with stories of the challenges faced by policymakers such as California Assembly member Sheila Kuehl, who introduced an early measure to make sexual orientation a protected category by California's school discrimination law. The law as originally proposed (titled the Dignity for All Students Act) failed. However, it later was accepted, as supporters shifted their rhetorical strategy from emphasizing "dignity" to highlighting "safety" (California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000), appealing to the perceived broader need to prevent school violence. For younger readers in particular, these specific stories/events may not have been previously encountered. Additionally, scholars and activists are likely to find a wealth of helpful details and statistics in the pages of book, as access to comprehensive data about LGBTQ youth, their experiences, and the solutions that can reduce or eliminate disparities is lacking (p. 327).

Although this is not the first book on school safety issues pertaining to LGBTQ students, previous books have taken different approaches. For example, some have focused on issues such as legal concerns or practical advice for educators seeking to create supportive environments. In contrast, *Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Schooling* highlights the impact of school environments on the well-being of LGBTQ students, an understudied relationship but one that is becoming increasingly recognized as important, as early distress faced by youth can lead to long-term negative health outcomes. The book would serve well paired with related texts for use in classroom instruction.

As the authors note, taking a long-term historical view, the pace of social change related to LGBTQ rights in recent years has been swift (p. 10). This book is an effort to provide a historical record of events preceding these rapid advancements, as well as to reaffirm the rights of LGBTQ students and highlight ways that school environments can continue to be improved, ultimately increasing students' well-being. In the wake of the most recent political shifts, at least in the U.S., readers may be left wondering

what new challenges will emerge. However, the evidence provided in *Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Schooling* gives hope that progress can and will be achieved despite setbacks.

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