

# Career Orientations and Professional Responsibility of Ukrainian Women with Different Sexual Orientations. Are Sexual Minorities Worse Adapted to Professional Activities?

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## ABSTRACT

Purpose of the article: to identify and compare career orientations and professional responsibility peculiarities in women with different sexual orientations to determine whether members of sexual minorities (SM) in Ukraine are less adapted to professional activity than members of the heterosexual majority. The study involved 162 Ukrainian women aged 16-46, including 36 lesbians, 76 bisexuals and 50 heterosexual women. The study had a cross-sectional design. It was used Career Orientations Inventory of E. Schein and standardized interview "Components of responsibility" of V. Ye. Kupchenko. It was found that bisexual women significantly less than women of other sexual orientations choose such career paths as General management, Pure challenge, Life Style and Entrepreneurial Creativity, which may be related to the general ambivalence of their life, which is set by their sexual orientation. Such career orientations may require self-confidence, a clarity of self-identity, which women with fluctuating sexual orientations may lack. A distinctive feature of lesbians was their greater understanding of the responsibility concept, which can be explained by the lack of an opportunity in their life to assign professional responsibility to a man, which corresponds to the traditional gender roles distribution. In general, it cannot be said that female SM representatives are significantly worse adapted to professional life than heterosexual women. The group of bisexual women can be considered as the most vulnerable.

**Keywords:** *lesbians, bisexuals, career anchors, professional responsibility, adaptation*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Profession and career are one of the most important parts of a person's life, which provides them with the opportunity to have a full-fledged physical and social life. People belonging to different social minorities often face to discrimination from the majority, which is detrimental to society by reducing the unique contribution of each person, who instead of concentrating on constructive tasks, is forced to defend their uniqueness and value. Sexual minorities (SMs) around the world are known to respond to organizational homophobia and heterosexism, either by creating a false heterosexual identity and avoiding sexuality issues at all (because they fear the impossibility of career success), or by taking that risk and coming out explicitly and then integrating their SM-identity to the working context [1].

In Ukraine, for example, in 2018, experts from the LGBT human rights center "Our World" recorded 24 cases of discrimination against LGBT Ukrainians in vocational area [2]. In 2019, 23 cases of discrimination were recorded in this area [3]. The statistics could be higher, but LGBT workers are mostly reluctant to seek protection of their violated labor rights through sexual orientation or gender identity due to unwillingness to disclose their privacy and due to distrust of justice, the possibility of legal protection. At the same time, the legislation of Ukraine contains anti-discrimination guarantees for employees, as well as the right of employees to compensation by the employer for non-pecuniary damage for violating the legal rights of citizens [4].

Issues such as persistent discrimination in the workplace, types of discrimination (formal / informal), fear of discrimination that forces to conceal sexual

orientation, variability in the degree of disclosure in the workplace and psychological correlations of openness / concealment of sexual orientation are discussed in many articles as shown in the review of J.M. Croteau [5]. However, the professional interests and choices of LGB people are insufficiently studied in psychology at the empirical level [6]. Lesbians' careers are known to be more complex and detours (circumferential), as they face additional doubts about the choice of disclosing or concealing their sexual orientation, and direct or indirect discrimination in the case of disclosure [1]. Bisexuals experience additional pressure from both homosexual and heterosexual acquaintances in the form of demands to "finally determine" their own sexual orientation [1].

Professional responsibility is an important psychological factor that makes a person a good professional, organizer and employee. According to L. May, professional responsibility involves treating oneself as a person who is personally accountable for the consequences of one's professional judgments and actions. At the same time, professional responsibility is a complex construct, a kind of "web of commitments" that turn into a set of compromises between them. This implies the inevitable tensions, dilemmas and conflicts between commitments to clients, society, employers, colleagues, family and friends, one's own professional and personal honesty, professional sphere and discipline [7]. However, since responsibility is a construct with a moral meaning [7], the immoral attitude of the environment towards a person in some degree loosens their moral feelings towards those who harm him. Therefore, in the context of discrimination, it can be expected a reduced level of responsibility from the representatives of the SM, if this discrimination seriously affects the moral attitudes of their victims.

*Purpose of the article:* to identify and compare career orientations and professional responsibility peculiarities in women with different sexual orientations to determine whether the representatives of SM in Ukraine are less adapted to professional activity than the representatives of the heterosexual majority. According to our hypotheses, career orientations and the level of responsibility, which differ significantly, disharmonious profiles of career orientations with very low scores on some orientations will indicate difficulties in the professional adaptation of SM representatives [8-10]. As D. M. Kaplan emphasizes: «In a perfect world, one free of discrimination and stigma, Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual (GLB) workers would be expected to pursue careers no differently than anyone else. Unfortunately, this is not a perfect world and GLB workers must make career decisions in an environment characterized by the potential for discrimination» [11]. The obtained results will allow to develop appropriate psychological interventions considering the degree of adaptability of SM representatives in the professional sphere.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study involved 162 women aged 16-46 years, mean age - 23.8 years. The region of residence is Eastern Ukraine, mainly Kharkiv region. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Educational level: 21 people with secondary education, 21 people with secondary special education, 30 people with incomplete higher education, 90 people with higher education. The sample included 36 lesbians, 76 bisexuals and 50 heterosexual women. The greater number of bisexual women in the sample was due to the importance of careful study of this group. According to review authors [1, 5, 6], although scientists often study lesbians and gays, bisexuality research is still in its infancy.

To measure the career orientations/anchors level, we used Career Orientations Inventory which was introduced by E. Schein [12] in V.A. Chiker adaptation [13]. By E. Schein career anchors belong to a person's self-concept and cover his/her talents, needs and values. It takes time to develop a career anchor, but once it appears, it becomes relatively stable, and people look for a match between them and their working conditions. [12]. The questionnaire measures 8 career orientations by 40 items of 6-point scale: Technical and Functional Competence, General Management, Autonomy and Independence, Security and Stability, Entrepreneurial Creativity, Service and Dedication to a Cause, Pure Challenge, Life Style. In adapted version the anchor Job Security and Stability counted separately as 2 scales. The adapted version has a 10-point scale instead of a 6-point one.

To measure the responsibility and the level of its components, we used the standardized interview "Components of responsibility" of V. Ye. Kupchenko [14]. This interview explores three components of responsibility: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. The interview consists of 15 questions with 2-3 possible answers [14]. An example of a question on the cognitive component of responsibility: "For me, responsibility is: a. Fulfillment of duties; b. Keeping promises made; c. Implementation of the planned by me, taking into account what is required". An example of a question on the emotional component of responsibility: "If you have a job that requires good faith, you: a. Are experiencing positive emotions; b. Are experiencing discomfort; c. Are experiencing negative feelings". An example of a question on the behavioral component of responsibility: "When completing an assignment in case of difficulties: a. You try to cope with them on your own; b. You seek help from competent persons; c. You are waiting for them to be resolved over time." For each question, it was possible to score from 0 to 2-3 points, accordingly, for each component of responsibility - from 0 to 15 points.

To process the data, we used the programs Microsoft Excel 2010 i STATISTICA 7.0, Stat Soft, Inc.,

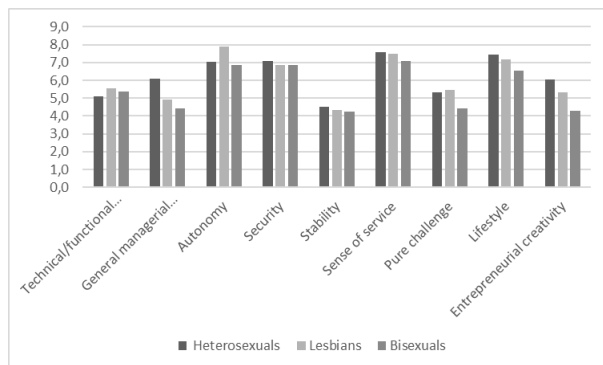
descriptive statistics methods, Spearman's correlation analysis and partial correlations, Kruskal-Wallis test, ANOVA [15, 16].

The research plan was approved by the commission on ethics of psychological research of the Faculty of Psychology of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (Minutes #12 of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021).

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. The level of career orientations analysis

On the Figure 1 we showed average level of career orientations in the studied groups.



**Figure 1** The average level of career orientations in the studied groups

As can be seen from the figure 1, all groups of women, regardless of sexual orientation, are least characterized by orientations towards permanent residence (Stability), challenge, and professional competence (Technical and Functional Competence). These career orientations are at the middle level of the scale (between 4 and 5 points). The most salient in the entire sample are orientations towards autonomy, service, integration of lifestyles and job security - these orientations are expressed in the respondents at the level of 7-8 points. So, they reflect the general cultural characteristics of the sample and the characteristics associated with biological sex, possibly age and education.

Indeed, the influence of age on the orientation of Technical and Functional Competence was found - it is higher in the youngest women (16–20 years old); General Management (the most salient in the groups of 21-25 years old and 31-50 years old, and the least expressed in the group of 26-30 years old); Autonomy (higher in the youngest and oldest group); Security (lower in the oldest group); Stability (higher in the middle age groups of 21-30 years); Service (higher in groups 21-25 and 31-50); Challenge (the most salient in the group of 21-25 years old); Life Style is low in the youngest group of 16-20 years old and Entrepreneurship is higher in groups of 21-

25 and 31-50 years old. The effect of age was confirmed by ANOVA: Wilks.lambda = .074,  $F(27, 429.96) = 1.70$ ,  $p = .016$ . The influence of the education level on career preferences was not revealed: ANOVA: Wilks.lambda=.078,  $F(36, 435,06)=1.03$ ,  $p=.422$ .

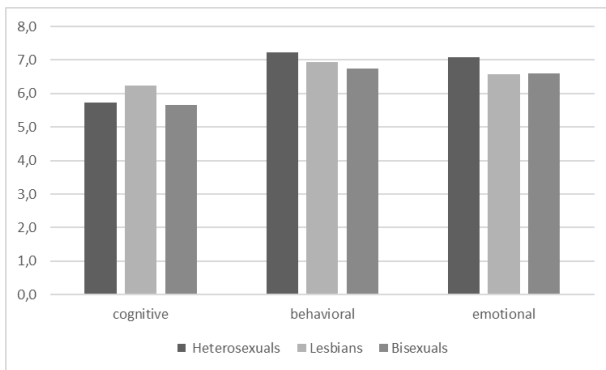
However, for some career anchors, differences were identified related to sexual orientation. In particular, sexual orientation affects the importance of the General management – as can be seen from Fig. 1, it is highest among heterosexuals and lowest among bisexuals (Kruskal-Wallis test:  $H(2, N= 162) = 15.26$ ,  $p = .0005$ ); Autonomy is the highest among lesbians (Kruskal-Wallis test:  $H(2, N= 162) = 8.37$ ,  $p = .0152$ ); Challenge is much lower in bisexual women (Kruskal-Wallis test:  $H(2, N= 162) = 10.21$ ,  $p = .0060$ ); Life style is higher among heterosexuals, lowest among bisexuals (Kruskal-Wallis test:  $H(2, N= 162) = 12.71$ ,  $p = .0017$ ) and Entrepreneurship is also higher among heterosexuals, lowest among bisexuals (Kruskal-Wallis test:  $H(2, N= 162) = 20.73$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

Since, as was found earlier, the importance of career orientations / anchors depends on age, we conducted a partial correlation analysis of the relationship between sexual orientation and career orientations when fixing the variable “age”. As a result, the dependence of the career anchor Autonomy on sexual orientation has disappeared, which means that the greater manifestation of this career orientation in lesbians is associated with their younger age in our sample, and not with the sexual orientation itself. All other career orientations (Management, Challenge, Life Style, and Entrepreneurship) remained linked to sexual orientation regardless of age. All these career orientations are significantly lower in bisexual women. This can be interpreted as that bisexual women are less clear about their career path; they may more doubt about their preferences, less trust themselves and their current choices. This may be due to the fluctuation of their sexual orientation, which often changed more than once over the course of 10 years, as shown by a longitudinal study [17]. That is, knowing their variability in relation to sexual preferences, they can expect similar variability in career orientations, therefore they express them less clearly than heterosexual and homosexual women.

#### 3.2. The analysis of the level of professional responsibility

On the Figure 2 we showed average level of professional responsibility components in the studied groups.

In general, the most pronounced among women in our sample was the behavioral component of responsibility, that is, real "practiced" responsibility, real responsible behavior. The least pronounced in all women in our sample was the cognitive component of responsibility, that is, understanding in essence what responsibility is.



**Figure 2** The average level of the responsibility components in the studied groups

At the same time, only the values of the cognitive responsibility component were significantly different among women of different sexual orientations. It was more pronounced in the lesbian group than in the other groups and lower in the bisexual group than in the other groups. Thus, lesbians better than others reflect and understand the concept of professional responsibility, perhaps because they are not used to looking for support in a husband, who will devote himself more to work in accordance with the traditional division of gender roles in the family. They support themselves financially and therefore can comprehend the concept of professional responsibility more than women who can get married and become a housewife, that is, to shift professional responsibility onto a man, taking responsibility for caring for the house, husband and children (traditional female gender role).

The fact that in bisexual women the cognitive component of responsibility was at the lowest level, again, may reflect their general confused identity, in which they do not know what their sexual preferences will be over time and what the dominant gender role will be.

Interestingly, the salience of the component of cognitive responsibility was independent of age and educational level either in the sample as a whole or in separate groups. Although other components of responsibility increased with age and with a higher level of education in the sample as a whole: correlation of the behavioral component of responsibility with age:  $\rho = .171, p = .029$ ; correlation of the behavioral component of responsibility with education:  $\rho = .168, p = .033$ ; correlation of the emotional component responsibility with age:  $\rho = .163, p = .037$ , correlation of the emotional component of responsibility with education:  $\rho = .165, p = .036$ .

### 3.3. The analysis of the relationships between career orientations and professional responsibility

Since the degree of responsibility shows how seriously a person takes the chosen professional path,

how much he is ready to take responsibility for the work he does for society, it was interesting to check the relationships between career orientations and components of responsibility in women of different sexual orientations.

For the sample as a whole, the correlation analysis showed the presence of direct relationships between two career orientations (Autonomy and Service) and the components of responsibility. Namely, the more women were characterized by the career orientation Autonomy, the more they developed the cognitive component of responsibility, i.e. understanding, awareness of responsibility:  $\rho = .159, p = .043$ . Also, the more women were oriented in their professional way towards serving people, the higher their cognitive and emotional components of responsibility were expressed:  $\rho = .274, p = .0004$  и  $\rho = .189, p = .015$  accordingly. The obtained relationships are completely logical, since autonomy, independence in a career does not give a chance to shift responsibility to the management or company, which makes it necessary to be more aware of it. Career orientation Service is associated with professions, when it is necessary to sacrifice oneself in something for the interests of the group, society, which is reinforced and based on the experience and comprehension of the issues of responsibility that is entrusted to oneself.

When analyzing separately groups of women with different sexual orientations, only one additional relationship was revealed among heterosexual women – the higher their cognitive responsibility was expressed, the higher their orientation on Life Style was manifested:  $\rho = .288, p = .042$ . Given that this orientation itself is most relevant for heterosexuals, this relationship can be explained by the need to fulfill several social roles – a wife, a mother, and a professional in a certain profession, which increases awareness of the factor of responsibility in such a diverse activity, the need for a balance of work / family / rest / self-development.

## 4. DISCUSSION

Researchers point out that there is a widespread stereotype that lesbian and gay people are attracted to non-traditional career interests for their gender. [1]. There is empirical evidence for this in a sample of gay men [6]. But there are other studies about similarities between lesbian and heterosexual women in appearance, interests, goals, and identity. [1]. Our data are more in line with the latter - the profile of most career orientations is similar for both lesbians and bisexuals, as well as heterosexuals. However, on the other hand, the similarity of career orientations may be a consequence of internalized homonegativity due to the long-term rejection of SM representatives by the society. As indicated by Y.B. Chung [6], some LGB representatives may want to develop more "gender-appropriate" interests or try out stereotypical career options for LGB. Therefore, psychologists or other consultants can help

SMs explore their true goals that are not related to social pressures, internalized stereotypes, or limited professional opportunities perception.

There are some similarities but also differences between the literature and our data about specific career orientations. In particular, gays and lesbians in America are less accepted in the workplace, so many of them either own a business or concentrate in occupations where sexual orientation is less a problem [1]. In our circumstances, women from SM have a lower level of career orientation Entrepreneurship than heterosexuals. It is possible that in our country, even so free activity as entrepreneurship in comparison with work in state organizations, is not enough free for SM-women to be able to direct their own energy there. The business climate in Ukraine is not good: it is in 72nd place out of 82 (in the ranking, the countries with the most favorable climate are in the first place, for example, Singapore is in 1st place, Switzerland is in 2nd place, Hong Kong is in 3rd place, etc.) [18].

However, the general decrease in the salience of career orientations in women from SM in Ukraine (according to our data, there are reduced orientations to Management, Challenge and Life Style) coincides with the trends recorded by other authors [1]. They explain this by the excessive energy expenditure required by SM representatives to create a positive self-identity. Therefore, career development for them may be delayed, stopped or misdirected [1].

D. M. Kaplan's study [11] argues that the priority anchors for SM representatives will be career anchors Autonomy, Stability and Life Style, which belong to the group of those based on needs and motives. D. M. Kaplan points out that in contrast to the group of anchors based on talent / ability (Professional Competence, Management, Entrepreneurship) and those based on values (Service and Challenge), it is the anchors of the group of needs and motives that overdeveloped in LGBT people through the pressure of discrimination and the need to manage sexual identity. Our results are partially coinciding with the above - really the orientations of Management, Entrepreneurship and Challenge were higher in heterosexuals, but Life Style, which belongs to

the group of needs-based anchors, was higher in heterosexuals in our sample. The fact that in Ukraine SM representatives mostly hide their sexual orientation may not allow them to integrate personal and professional life, to maintain the appropriate balance, which is characteristic of the anchor Life Style.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

In general, it cannot be said that female SM representatives are much worse adapted in professional life than heterosexual women, if we consider such professional activity characteristics as career orientations / anchors and professional responsibility.

No sharp differences were found either in their preferred career orientations, or in the severity of the responsibility they realize, feel, or implement in their behavior. There were few differences between the groups, and they were at a small significant level.

Bisexual women significantly less than women of other sexual orientations choose such career paths as General management, Pure challenge, Life Style and Entrepreneurial Creativity, which may be related to the general ambivalence of their life, which is set by their sexual orientation. Such career orientations may require self-confidence, a clarity of self-identity, which women with fluctuating sexual orientations may lack.

A distinctive feature of lesbians was their greater understanding of the responsibility concept, which can be explained by the lack of an opportunity in their life to assign professional responsibility to a man, which corresponds to the traditional gender roles distribution.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Lutsenko O.: research design; processing of primary data; statistical analysis; manuscript preparation. Nalyvaiko O.: manuscript preparation; manuscript editing. Kreydun N.: manuscript editing. The authors report that there is no any conflict of interest.

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