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# Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgendered People and Human Resource Development: An Examination of the Literature in Adult Education and Human Resource Development

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# **Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgendered People and Human Resource Development: An Examination of the Literature**

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## **Abstract**

Issues related to human resource development (HRD) and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people such as workplace inclusion, employee affinity groups, and LGBT-specific diversity initiatives are being addressed in organizations more often now than ever before. This paper explores the existing literature on LGBT issues in HRD and adult education through a systemic review in order to determine what research exists and what future directions are necessary. This review revealed a small core of research related to these issues. Existing work is mainly conceptual, and there is a lack of quantitative work. Topics of focus are related to organizational change and diversity efforts, with very little research on HR policy, career development, and workplace education. Key findings include that HR professionals have primarily served in a reactive role, rather than leading on these issues.

*Keywords:* HRD research; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT); sexual minorities; diversity

Issues related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals in United States (U.S.) workplaces have captured the attention of organizations recently, causing favorable changes in relatively short time periods. The Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index measures an employer's "commitment to equal treatment of employees, consumers, and investors, irrespective of [an employee's] sexual orientation or gender identity and expression" (Corporate Equality Index, 2007, p. 12) using a scale of 0-100 percent. The 2010 report noted that 305 businesses received a perfect 100 percent rating. That number was a 45 percent increase over the previous year, and those 305 businesses represent over 9.3 million full-time employees (Corporate Equality Index, 2010). Even in these challenging economic times, "the Corporate Equality Index once again demonstrates that businesses recognize the importance of working with and providing for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender workers and consumers" (Corporate Equality Index, 2010, p. 1).

From a research standpoint, however, LGBT workplace issues have not received a great deal of attention. Ragins (2004) notes that they “constitute one of the largest, but least studied, minority groups in the workforce” (p. 35). An examination of LGBT workplace issues is appropriate for HRD researchers. LGBT individuals constitute a sexual minority (Kameny, 1971; Leonard, 2003) that could benefit from conceptual, empirical, and theoretical work connecting the issue of sexual minorities as a distinct group to diversity and other concerns of HRD.

Is the lack of research-related attention on this topic related to lack of interest on the part of, or lack of acceptance by, the academic community? In 2008, Githens, Schmidt, Rocco, and Gedro hosted the first preconference on LGBT issues in HRD at the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) International Conference. AHRD proved to be slower in its acceptance of the topic. Schmidt and Githens (2010) reported that some reviewers for their preconference felt the topic was extremely important, however, one reviewer wondered whether it was a topic the organization wanted to promote and others questioned the importance of the topic in general. The session went on to become the highest-attended preconference held that year. Feedback from participants of the 2008 LGBT preconference demonstrated a demand for guidelines on evidence-based practice on LGBT issues in HRD.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the literature in human resource development and adult education to determine what work has been done related to HRD, identify the topics which were covered, types of papers published, and research methods used and use this information to create a research agenda to address the intersection of LGBT issues and HRD. To do this, we searched the literature asking these questions: What types of articles are published (e.g., conceptual, literature reviews, empirical studies) and what methods are used? To what extent does the literature address the concerns of LGBT people? Do the articles published provide an adequate foundation for future research? What topics, trends, issues should form future research agendas?

This review includes research from the fields of adult education and human resource development because of the close-knit and overlapping relationship between the two disciplines. Three of the four authors of this paper are in both fields, some graduate programs house programs of study in both fields, and some HRD programs grew from adult education programs. The search of the adult education literature begins in 1994 just before the first article by Hill (1995) was published on LGBT issues. Work on this topic in adult education spawned the work in HRD where the first article was published by Gedro, Cervero, & Johnson-Bailey (2002). The search of HRD literature begins in 2001 just before that first article appeared in *Human Resource Development International*.

This review is organized as follows: A conceptual framework for diversity and LGBT inclusion will be presented followed by article analysis by content and by research approaches employed. Summary tables regarding article content and research approaches are then presented. Content-related and research approach-related themes will be discussed, followed by a discussion of gaps in current research and recommendations for future research.

### **Diversity and LGBT Inclusion: A Conceptual Framework**

Given the substantial demographic changes of recent years in the U.S. workforce, workforce diversity has become a compelling force for organizational change (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Although race, ethnicity, gender and culture have traditionally been the dimensions of diversity that have received the most attention in the workplace (Ross-Gordon &

Brooks, 2004), the concept of diversity has been expanded to include a broader spectrum of factors. Diversity refers to:

the multitude and full range of human differences. We each bring our diversity—our different perspectives, experiences, and identity—to all we do in life. As we tap into those differences . . . we bring innovation, new perspectives, fresh viewpoints to bear on the bottom line, creating competitive advantage that only a wide range of talents and ideas can offer. (Jamison & Miller, 2006, p. 1)

Diversity encompasses visible and non-visible aspects of identities by which individuals categorize themselves and others (Ely & Thomas, 2001). These specific identities are also known as dimensions of diversity, and they cover a range of individual characteristics. Diversity is composed of “variations in race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, physical abilities, social class, age, and other such socially meaningful categorizations, together with the additional differences caused by or signified by these markers” (Ferdman, 1995, p. 37). Additional dimensions were traditionally viewed as less salient, but can be as powerful, include educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, and work experience (Loden and Rosener, 1991).

Diversity, according to Cox (1993), includes representation of people from different groups within a social system. Decisions are made about who to include and who to exclude when discussing diversity. What factors create social systems? Who is included and who is excluded? Arguably, social dominance and social identity play a role (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). While LGBT individuals and allies might respond in one way to this question, there are others whose definitions would exclude those populations. Indeed, Cox (1993) posits that “most individuals have relatively high awareness of the identity that most distinguishes them from the majority group in a particular setting and considerably less awareness of other identities” (p. 50). Diversity and the knowledge surrounding it therefore is continually evolving. Harris (2007) summarizes this evolution as follows: “For decades, the focus (of diversity initiatives) had been on recruitment efforts and talent management programs related to African Americans, Hispanics, and other people of color. Even though corporations focused on race, those issues helped open the door for discussions on gender, age, and, most recently, sexual orientation and gender identity” (p. 64).

In the development of a business case for diversity, organizations have identified numerous benefits. Cultures in which diversity is valued have been associated with increases in the quality of group performance, creativity of ideas, cooperation, and the number of perspectives and alternatives considered (Brickson, 2000). Inclusion of different demographic groups brings different styles, insights, and perspectives into an organization, fostering mutual contact and a decrease in stereotyping (Ely & Thomas, 2001). A high level of acceptance of diversity increases mutual learning and employees’ readiness for organizational change (Iles & Hayers, 1997). Acceptance ensures that individual differences in values, opinions, and beliefs are encouraged and accepted (McMillan-Capehart, 2006). Some organizations see a strategic imperative for managing diversity, realizing that having a proactive HR policy on diversity enhances competitive advantage (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Conversely and specifically related to LGBT individuals, Liddle, Luzzo, Hauenstein, and Schuck (2004) note that fear of harassment and discrimination in the workplace can result in a variety of negative consequences. These include feelings of isolation, anxiety, reduced creative energy, and decreased levels of collaboration. They also note that “hostile workplaces may force LGBT employees to stay closeted (that is, to hide their LGBT identities)” (p. 35), which may adversely affect the

employee's physical health (Liddle, Luzzo, Hauenstein & Schuck, 2004). These findings are similar to those of Cox (1993), who posits that the negative work outcomes associated with a poor diversity climate include increased absenteeism, lower productivity, and higher turnover.

While organizations may attend to workforce diversity for many reasons, Yang (2005) notes that institutional influence may be due to coercive pressure from statute and mandate, normative pressure exerted by community and professional associations, and mimetic pressure to adopt competitors' practices. Legislation is not enough to facilitate positive diversity outcomes (Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000). Instead, organizations can create more positive effects by simultaneous pressures than by any force working alone (Yang, 2005). The literature consistently shows that any organizational efforts to encourage employment of a diverse workforce will be wasted if that effort is not matched by an effort to ensure that the organization's structures (e.g., policies, procedures) and culture are inclusive and supportive of differences (Jamison & Miller, 2006; Kwak, 2003; Thomas, 1990; Thomas & Ely, 1996). Some organizations make the mistake of emphasizing certain minority groups in their diversity initiatives at the expense of other groups. Focusing on some and ignoring others can send confusing messages to employees and can result in opposition to diversity efforts (Loden, 1996). The way all employees are treated with respect to their individualities is critical to employee satisfaction and drives performance.

Much of the inequity in organizations occurs because employees are treated the same and differences are ignored (Wilson, 1997). Effectively managing diversity means acknowledging differences, including "acknowledging individual employee needs and then accommodating these needs" (p. 18). Told to treat every employee the same to comply with laws on workplace equity, managers are confused when told to treat employees differently because of individuals' diverse characteristics, values, backgrounds, and experiences. Sense making about workforce diversity is difficult (Roberson & Stevens, 2006), especially since, as noted earlier, lifestyle and societal attitude changes around aspects of diversity are occurring at such a rapid pace and with such complexity that they are sometimes difficult to manage.

Although there has been increased interest in learning about the management of LGBT issues in HRD, extensive research is still needed (Ward, 2003; Ward & Winstanley, 2005). In terms of research, sexuality can be as significant of a defining social category as race, class, gender, disability, and occupation (Kormanik, 2009; Kudlick, 2003; UK Government, 2003; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001), yielding important implications for workforce learning and performance. Organizations differ in their perspectives of including sexual minorities in their diversity initiatives, on a spectrum from hostility to advocacy (Rocco, Landorf, & Delgado, 2009). "While most companies understand that this is a core dimension of peoples' diversity, they are less inclined to defend the rights of LGB employees when they are threatened" (Loden, 1996, p. 85). Loden noted organizations may come under attack by community and religious groups opposed to LGBT rights and fear the loss of some customers. Such perspectives have implications for organizational culture, productivity, and commitment of LGBT employees and others who value respect for their LGBT colleagues.

In some instances, discussion of the disenfranchisement of a group may be trivialized because the prevalence of that population is not large enough (Gonsiorek, Sell, & Weinrich, 1995). To help place sexuality in context with other workforce populations of interest to HRD research and practice we provide demographic figures for comparative groups. For example, the U.S. civilian labor force is 13% Hispanic, 12% African American, 5% Asian, and 2% multi-race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Approximately 4% of the U.S. workforce has some form of

disabling condition (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Organizations spend time, money, and other resources on HRD programs to identify and address the needs of these discrete populations. In comparison, approximately 7% of the population identifies as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Witeck & Combs, 2006), with some reporting numbers as high as 17% (Gonsiorek, Sell, & Weinrich, 1995). When considering these statistics, it is important to remember that the definition of sexuality is laden with social, psychological, and political meanings. Given the perceived risk involved in self-disclosure of identity and concerns with anonymity, these figures are generally accepted as a “floor measure” or absolute minimum.

### **Research Design**

Both adult education and human resource development journals and conference proceedings were searched. In adult education we searched the proceedings from the annual Adult Education Research Conference, *Adult Education Quarterly*, and *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education*. In human resource development we searched the proceedings from the annual Academy of Human Resource Development Conference, *Advances in Developing Human Resources (ADHR)*; *Human Resource Development International (HRDI)*, *Human Resource Development Quarterly (HRDQ)* and *Human Resource Development Review (HRDR)*.

The search terms listed here were used to search the adult education and human resource development literature. Search terms used in both fields were sexual orientation, gay and lesbian, gender identity, sexual minority, queer, bisexual, transex\*, transgen\*. Articles with these terms as keywords, in the titles, or in the abstracts were then read for relevance to HRD. Articles and papers were included if they were related to HRD. Any publication that was not on a topic related to HRD was excluded.

### **Identifying literature in Adult Education**

A search (using the terms listed above) of the table of contents of the Adult Education Research Conference proceedings from 1994 to 2009 uncovered 26 papers on LGBT issues in adult education. Topics covered in these 26 papers included sexual identity development; rights, citizenship, and policy issues; queer knowledge and pedagogy; straight allies; podcasting; HIV; reparative therapy; and male development. The authors determined that in order to qualify for inclusion in this review, papers had to focus on both LGBT issues and a workplace-related topic. Additionally, that intersection of topics (LGBT issues and the workplace) had to be the major, rather than a peripheral focus, of the paper. Out of the 26 papers, three papers directly addressed HRD issues: learning and participation at an LGBT employee conference (Gedro, 2007a), employee resource groups (Githens & Aragon, 2007), and approaches to diversity for LGBT change agents (Githens, 2009b).

The search of *Adult Education Quarterly* and *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education* produced thirteen articles. Two articles appeared in *Adult Education Quarterly* between 1994 and 2009. Neither article was relevant to HRD and was not included in this review based on criteria noted earlier.

*New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education (NDACE)*, the monograph series in the field, published nine chapters in Hill’s special issue dedicated to sexual minorities, included seven chapters related to HRD (2006a). These chapters covered straight privilege and career development (Rocco & Gallagher, 2006), lesbians’ experiences in organizations (Gedro, 2006), organizational issues (Muñoz & Thomas, 2006, Hill, 2006c), workplace policies (Hornsby,

2006), sexual identity development in the workplace (King & Biro, 2006), and the experience of being queer in an organization (Hill, 2006b).

### **Identifying literature in Human Resource Development**

Our search (using the terms listed above) revealed that twenty-eight papers that mentioned LGBT issues were published in the proceedings of the annual AHRD conference from 2000-2009. Only ten AHRD proceedings papers from 2000-2009 dealt with LGBT issues in HRD as the main focus for the paper. The other 18 articles noted LGBT issues in peripheral ways (as a dimension of diversity, for example).

Twelve articles were published in three of the four HRD-related publications. In 2004, “How Lesbians Learn to Negotiate the Heterosexism of Corporate America” was published in *HRDI*, making it the first article on LGBT issues published in the four AHRD journals. *HRDQ* published an editorial by Gedro (2007b) entitled “Conducting Research on LGBT Issues: Leading the Field All over Again.” The February 2009 edition of *ADHR*, edited by Rocco, Gedro, and Kormanik (2009), focused on LGBT issues in HRD. The 10 articles addressed topics such as workplace diversity initiatives, LGBT career development, work-life balance and same-sex couples, transgender issues in the workplace, LGBT employee groups, and workplace allies.

### **Analysis of Articles**

After identifying and reading the abstracts of the papers related to LGBT issues, the authors held discussions by phone and e-mail to create an inductively-developed categorization scheme. The categories developed included the following: Identity development, pedagogy/classroom issues, research approaches and needs, social change and policy, and workplace and organizational issues (see Table 1). Three of those categories, identity development, pedagogy/classroom issues, and social change and policy, were then omitted from this work because those papers focused on adult education in ways not relevant to HRD. The broad category of workplace and organizational issues included all papers that we concluded were related to HRD. Workplace and organizational issues was inductively subdivided as follows: Organizational change, LGBT-focused diversity initiatives, HR policy, career development, and workplace education.

Research approaches used in the articles will be discussed first, followed by a topical summary of the findings from the articles addressing workplace and organizational issues.

### **Research Approaches Used**

Overall, the literature on LGBT issues in HRD and adult education is heavier on conceptual papers than empirical studies and literature reviews. See Table 2 for a summary of types of paper (empirical/non empirical) in each thematic categorization scheme.

All of the chapters in the *NDACE* issue were conceptual pieces. One of the two articles published in *AEQ* was empirical while the other article was a literature review. Nine of the 26 papers presented at AERC presented findings from qualitative empirical studies. Of the 12 AHRD conference papers dealing with LGBT issues in HRD, only three were empirical studies. Three of the 12 conference presentations were innovative, or discussion-type sessions, and one was a preconference on LGBT issues and HRD. The remaining five presentations were conceptual pieces, including reviews of literature.

**Table 1**  
**Categorization of Papers**

Category	Number of publications	Publications by Type
Identity development	8	<i>ADHR</i> , 1 <i>AERC Conf</i> , 7
Pedagogy/ Classroom Issues	9	<i>ADHR</i> , 1 <i>AEQ</i> , 1 <i>AERC Conf</i> , 4 <i>AHRD Conf</i> , 1 <i>NDACE</i> , 2
Social change and policy	8	<i>AERC Conf</i> , 8
Research approaches & needs	6	<i>AEQ</i> , 1 <i>AERC Conf</i> , 3 <i>AHRD Conf</i> , 1 <i>HRDQ</i> , 1
Workplace and organizational issues	30	<i>ADHR</i> , 8 <i>AERC Conf</i> , 4 <i>AHRD Conf</i> , 10 <i>HRDI</i> , 1 <i>NDACE</i> , 7
Total	61	<i>ADHR</i> , 10 <i>AEQ</i> , 2 <i>AERC Conf</i> , 26 <i>AHRD Conf</i> , 12 <i>HRDI</i> , 1 <i>HRDQ</i> , 1 <i>NDACE</i> , 9

*Note.* A list of specific papers in each category is available upon request.

Nine of the 12 articles presented in the four HRD-related journals were conceptual pieces or literature reviews. One was qualitative, one was mixed methods, and the other was an editorial. There is a complete lack of articles reporting quantitative empirical findings.



**Table 2**  
**Research Methods Used in LGBT-related Papers**

	Conceptual	Lit. Review	Position Papers	Qualitative Empirical	Quantitative Empirical	Mixed Method Empirical
Identity development	3	0	0	5	0	0
Pedagogy/ Classroom Issues	6	0	0	2	0	0
Social change and policy Research	3	0	1	5	0	0
approaches & needs	0	2	3	1	0	0
Workplace and organizational issues	19	0	2	7	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

### **Workplace and Organizational Issues**

The sub-categories that emerged from the workplace and organizational issues category are organizational change, LGBT-focused diversity initiatives, HR policy, career development, and workplace education. We present an overview of the papers we found that fit each category. Some papers are related to more than one category.

### **Organizational Change**

Organizations have approached civil rights legislation and social pressure to diversify workforces from different perspectives ranging from hostile, compliant, inquiry, inclusion, and advocacy (Rocco, Landorf, Delgado, 2009). Hostility is the most negative and advocacy the most positive perspective towards inclusion of LGBT workers. These perspectives are held by individuals and the organization and may not be the same for both. Organizational change initiatives under each perspective differ as do their diversity initiatives.

Valuing diversity “was originally conceived without reference to sexual identity, gender identity, or gender expression” (Hill, 2006b, p. 9). Hill explains that most organizations have failed to consider the relationship between sexuality, technologies, culture, and society within the workplace. This intersection is key in discussions on LGBT issues and organizational change. Human sexuality includes opposite sex and same sex sexual orientations, gender identity, and gender expression (Hill, 2006b; Kormanik, 2009). Organizations are blind to the materials that straight employees bring to the workplace that proclaim their sexuality and orientation such as pictures of partners, sharing memories with colleagues about personal moments, and even appearance and style (Rocco & Gallagher, 2006). Yet when LGBT workers bring in similar materials these items can be construed as offensive by some. Organizations that sell consumer goods capitalize on sexuality in their marketing campaigns yet “policy statements and training programs [focused] on sex discrimination and sexual harassment [are written] ignoring sexual

orientation and gender identity (Kormanik, 2009, p. 25). Hornsby (2006) suggests that organizational policy changes that include sexual minorities through inclusive language and particular attention to sexual minority issues can drive organizational change. To drive organizational change, harassment policies must be enforced, domestic partner benefits established, preparations made to address resistance, and commitment from leaders must be visible (Munoz & Thomas, 2006).

LGBT employees and allies have sought changes through workplace advocacy efforts because of the need for organizational changes in policies, practices, and individual attitudes. These efforts occur through the informal efforts of individuals and groups, employer-sponsored groups for LGBT people and allies (sometimes known as employee resource groups, affinity groups, or employee networks), outside workplace groups affiliated with unions or other workplace-oriented organizations (sometimes known as LGBT Caucuses), and more subversive groups that exist outside of traditional organizational structures (Githens & Aragon, 2009). Advocacy for LGBT employees exists in all sectors of the economy. However, those in the corporate sector have achieved changes more quickly than those working in the public sector, due to social and political factors (i.e., governmental employers are less risk adverse due to political constituencies) and economic factors (i.e., capitalism results in an increased drive to retain talented employees within corporate settings) (Githens, 2009a).

As an example of corporate activism on the individual level, Gedro, Cervero, and Johnson-Bailey (2004) examined how lesbian managers/executives navigated heterosexism. They found that the women felt a personal responsibility to advocate for change by educating others about the heterosexism they and other LGBT people faced. MacDonnell's (2009) work illustrates how such activism can result in both small-scale local changes and larger policy changes. Her study described the policy and practice positions developed by the provincial nursing association as a result of insights from Canadian nurses who advocate for lesbian health issues. In this example, individual advocacy, scholarly research, and professional policy development converged to result in changes that benefit both patients and nurses.

Advocates for LGBT workplace changes often seek change for personal, professional, and political reasons (Humphrey, 1999). Gedro (2007a) examined the learning of attendees at a national LGBT workplace conference using transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997) and Friere's emancipatory theory of transformation (Friere, 1970). In Gedro's study, HR departments were often identified by participants as ineffective in addressing LGBT issues; the conference emboldened these participants to make changes in their organizations that HR did not (Gedro, 2007a). The conference provided participants with ideas for strategizing and making the case for more inclusive workplaces, despite the structural and personal obstacles they might encounter.

The role of allies has been a salient theme in studies examining advocacy within workplaces. Brooks and Edwards (2009) found that LGBT employees want allies who foster emotionally inclusive environments for LGBT colleagues, who provide uncompromising support for the safety of LGBT colleagues by combating homophobia, and who advocate to others for equity and inclusion in policies and practices. In considering what motivates allies to do this work, both Gedro (2007a) and Brooks and Edwards found that allies had a transformational experience that illuminated the importance of advocating for LGBT issues. In Gedro's study, the LGBT workplace conference provided transformational experiences for the allies. These allies' perspectives were transformed both in revealing their own personal heterosexism and their responsibility to seek workplace changes rather than being complacent in letting others seek

change. In a case study of a long-term change effort within one organization, Githens (2009b) found that while initial enthusiasm from allies could help in moving a workplace advocacy effort forward at critical points, the LGBT employees' perseverance brought changes to fruition. Brooks and Edwards' study found that allies range from (a) those who are personally supportive on an individual level to LGBT colleagues to (b) those who quietly advocate in their own immediate circles of influence to (c) one ally-activist who started a national movement of allies working for LGBT equity.

### **LGBT-Focused Diversity Initiatives**

Workforce diversity initiatives differ in their inclusiveness of sexual minority issues, in their perceived value by non-minority employees, and in the operationalization of their implementation. Rocco, Landorf, and Delgado (2009) proposed a framework for examining organizations' approaches to addressing sexual minority issues within diversity initiatives, including hostility, compliance, inquiry, inclusion, and advocacy. Workforce diversity programs most often focus on four areas: increasing workplace representation of traditionally underrepresented groups, eliminating discrimination, preventing harassment, and promoting inclusion. In each of these goal areas, the focus has been primarily race and gender (Maxwell, 2005). When gender has been cited as a workforce diversity factor, the espoused focus has been on the differences in workplace issues, challenges, and needs of women and men. Most organizations have policy statements and training programs on sex discrimination and sexual harassment. The need for compliance has resulted in organizations' gender diversity programs focusing primarily on sex discrimination and sexual harassment (Kormanik, 2009). Gender diversity programming has minimally covered the broader spectrum of sexuality. Only recently have organizations put sexual orientation into their non-discrimination policies, with an even smaller number adding gender identity (see Heller, 2006; Human Rights Campaign Foundation [HRCF], 2006). Without a need for compliance, discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity is omitted from diversity initiatives.

Githens (2009b) explored the ways LGBT individuals use education to seek equitable policies and improve campus climates. The qualitative study examined the approaches to diversity education by activists seeking domestic partner benefits. The results showed the importance of building coalitions focused on action. Initiatives geared toward identity-oriented policy changes required LGBT individuals to call others into action and keep them motivated to seek culture and climate changes that support the initiative. Kormanik's (2009) mixed methods study was undertaken in concert with a diversity initiative. The research examined employees' awareness development around five facets of sexuality—sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual attraction, sexual orientation, and transgender issues. The results showed differences in awareness, suggesting that each facet of sexuality should be treated as a discrete diversity factor. The results also showed that awareness development around sexual orientation and gender identity was less developed than for sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual attraction, confirming the need to raise awareness is greater for the facets of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Rocco, Gallagher, Gedro, Hornsby, and van Loo's (2006) conference panel explored the social construction of heterosexist identity in terms of diversity training, career development and succession planning for LGBT workers, the effects of heterosexism on LGBT career development, and strategies to overcome heterosexism in the workplace. Githens and colleagues' (2008) preconference symposium focused on developing HRD practices that are inclusive of

sexual minority employees. Hill (2006b) reflected on the resistance encountered when organizations acknowledge the worth of sexual minorities as part of workforce diversity. The resistance was in the form of backlashes to diversity change e.g. straight employees demanding equal time or attention. Evidence-based practices exist that may help HRD professionals avoid resistance that can result from attempts to create fully inclusive workplaces. Examples of evidenced-based practices are couching the message that the organization is gay-friendly in the concept of equal opportunity for all workers and allowing workers to “select themselves out of positions” (Hill, 2006b, p. 13) when they feel their moral or religious sentiments are compromised.

## **HR Policy**

Issues related to HR policy persist as some of the most tangible measures of an organization’s level of support for LGBT people. Research related to these issues addresses ways in which organizations address policies and practices related to wages, insurance, leaves of absences, and work/life balance.

Much of the effort to bring LGBT-friendly organizational changes over the last 10 years has focused on persuading employers to adopt benefits for same-sex partners of employees (Githens, 2008; Githens, 2009a; Muñoz & Thomas, 2006). Benefits have likely been at the center of attention due to the clear inequities that have presented themselves between LGBT and heterosexual employees. Hornsby and Munn (2009) explain that 29% to 33% of employees’ earnings come from their benefits packages. LGBT employees not receiving inclusive benefits lose a substantial portion of their income, when compared to the total compensation of heterosexual colleagues. Companies offer domestic partner health benefits in an effort to remain competitive, in response to public pressure, and/or in order to not engage in unfair practices (HRCF, 2010).

The simple adoption of these benefits is not without problems. Some employers require extra documentation for employees to prove a domestic partnership, such as a declaration of permanent relationship, joint ownership of assets, or joint residence for a specified period (Hornsby, 2006). Despite these specific requirements, most employers do not require any such documentation for heterosexual employees, not even a marriage certificate when adding a new spouse to employer-provided benefits. Another example of an inequity is requiring same-sex domestic partners to annually recertify their partnerships to maintain benefits eligibility (Hornsby & Munn, 2009). Employers rarely ask married heterosexual couples to certify annually that they continue to be married and rarely require more than checking a box to indicate marital status. Some employers that have inclusive policies have failed to update their documents and forms with inclusive language (e.g., using “spouse” but not including “partner”) (Hornsby & Munn, 2009). This causes problems for LGBT employees who are not aware of the inclusive policies and the benefits being offered.

An additional concern originates in federal tax policy. Both the employer-paid portion and the employee-paid portion of domestic partner health benefits are taxed as employee income by the federal government, while not being taxed for married couples. Hornsby and Munn (2009) recommend that employers provide compensation to cover those additional costs. van Loo and Rocco (2008) examined approaches to measuring earnings differences between heterosexuals, bisexuals, gays, and lesbians. Although there are some problems with all such research due to issues of how to identify LGBT individuals in large scale studies (van Loo and Rocco, 2008), past research in the U.S. has found consistently lower wages for gay men than

heterosexual men. Research on lesbians' earnings has been less conclusive (van Loo and Rocco, 2008).

Work-life benefits consider employees' needs outside of the workplace. Benefits receiving the most attention include provisions that allow for caring for children through on-site daycare, parental leave for mothers and fathers, and flextime arrangements. Munn, Gedro, Hornsby, and Rocco (2009) contend that these policies and the research about these benefits primarily address the needs of women (and sometimes men) in heterosexual marriages. Munn and her colleagues contend that LGBT individuals are required to educate their heterosexual superiors, colleagues, and subordinates about their specific needs, which may vary from the work-life benefits currently offered by many employers. Additionally, the needs of transgender employees differ from the needs of LGB and heterosexual employees and should be carefully considered (Davis, 2009). For example, employers can ensure that hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery are available through employer-provided benefits for those individuals who need access to those health services.

### **Career Development**

Due to the historical career risks for LGBT workers, it is not surprising that one scholar has written four conceptual papers (Gedro, 2006; 2007c; 2009) and conducted one empirical study on lesbian executives' career development strategies (Gedro, Cervero & Johnson-Bailey, 2004). For LGBT employees, career development is challenging due to the dilemma of whether to hide or disclose their identity in a multitude of work-related interactions. These dilemmas around identity and openness are an aspect of identity management (Gedro, 2009a). Identity has to be managed for LGBT people at the same time individuals are developing their identities as LGBT. Furthermore, "challenges associated with disclosure are not simply faced once and overcome; instead, they may be engaged on an ongoing or periodic basis throughout life" (Hill, 2009, p. 350). Since individuals' career pathways emerge when they are adolescents, this false heterosexual identity combined with fear of harassment, can limit career choices. Gedro (2009a) explains that heterosexual individuals do not consider the safety or appropriateness of a career choice in terms of sexual orientation. Lesbians do not have to consider "accommodating men or conforming to traditional gender roles" (Gedro, 2009a, p. 59) when making career choices, nor is their non-adherence to traditional gender roles judged negatively as it is in the case of gay men. Men advance in their careers often through relationship building and bonding with other men. Masculinity and heterosexuality play prominent roles in these relationships putting gay men at a disadvantage.

Heterosexism costs organizations in decreased productivity and increased turnover of LGBT individuals (Rocco & Gallagher, 2006). Fearing harassment, editing every word one says in order to conceal one's true identity, and not being able to be an authentic individual require effort. The effort required to manage identity at work is not available to increase productivity. Organizations which maintain hostile environments towards minorities lose those same minorities, the investments made to develop them, and incur replacement costs. Lesbian corporate executives learned to manage their identities and negotiate heterosexism in corporations by developing skills in prescreening other employees to determine their receptivity to lesbians, disclosing strategically, and using their position to educate others on the challenges faced by lesbians (Gedro, Cervero, Johnson-Bailey, 2004).

## **Workplace Education**

Workplace education is the systematic development of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by a person in order to effectively perform a given task or job (Patrick, 2000). While at one point, the terms “training” and “education” may have been distinctly different, Schmidt (2006) notes that “the line between training and education is blurred to the point that the terms may be interchangeable” (p. 9). They will be used interchangeably in this paper. Different than learning in the workplace, which can be informal and incidental, training is planned and purposeful. It is important to note that in this paper, workplace education initiatives are examined separate from *general* diversity initiatives and *general* diversity training. The distinction is related to course content. In diversity related training and initiatives, LGBT issues are one of many dimensions of diversity pulled together and studied as parts of the whole concept. Workplace education issues look at the relationship between LGBT employees and different aspects of educational processes in the workplace.

There is a small body of research on LGBT issues in workplace education. Research on LGBT issues in workplace training has addressed education for HIV/AIDS prevention among sex workers and healthcare workers (Hill, 2005). Much discussion revolves around the development of curriculum to support LGBT inclusion in the workplace, including the degree to which training materials and workplace trainers acknowledge LGBT employees and issues in training programs. This concept, also known as queering the curriculum (Chapman & Gedro, 2007) has been researched in multiple educational settings, including the workplace. Chapman and Gedro (2007) concluded that queering the curriculum is an effective way to promote exploration of GLBT issues, as well as diversity and inclusion, in the workplace.

## **Gaps in HRD Research and Recommendations for Future Research**

The authors of this paper have concluded that a small group of scholars, many of whom are either LGBT or dedicated allies, are conducting research and writing about LGBT issues in HRD. Research should be conducted from multiple perspectives and not remain the purview of the minority group. Heterocentric bias may be present when studies repeatedly ignore the concerns of a whole category of people (van Loo and Rocco, 2008).

Gaps in the diversity research are related to basic education on LGBT issues in the workplace and on initiatives designed to raise awareness among all employees. However, sexual orientation is not regularly included as a variable considered in diversity studies, organizational development/culture, or any studies where race and gender are seen as important variables (van Loo and Rocco, 2008). Sometimes scholars simply do not consider LGBT employees as a variable because it may be invisible. Other times scholars choose not to include survey items about sexual minority status and concerns for fear of offending other survey respondents (Munn, Rocco, Bowman, & van Loo, 2011). Future research should investigate whether adding survey items about sexual minority status and concerns are offensive to participants. If found to be the case, research should also focus on what HRD practitioners can do in terms of diversity initiatives and organizational development to change these attitudes. Dismissing LGBT concerns and over issues of sensitivity can prevent the pursuing of legitimate research.

Research could examine which types of advocacy efforts are most effective in various types of organizations. For example, more aggressive approaches may lead to changes in one type of organization, while more passive or subtle approaches may be more effective in other types of organizations. The organizational perspectives from hostility to advocacy could benefit from research at the organizational, management and individual levels (Rocco, Landorf, &

Delgado, 2009). Questions that could be asked are: What is the relationship between the organizational perspective and the individual worker's perspective towards sexual minority inclusion? How do organizations identify with these perspectives? How does an organization move from being hostile to being an advocate for inclusion? A repeated theme in the literature has been the reaction of HR to LGBT concerns, as opposed to leading changes on these issues. As the HR profession seeks to be more proactive overall, research could examine how HR professionals successfully execute leadership on making changes to foster climates, policies, and practices that are friendlier to LGBT employees.

Kormanik's (2009) facets of sexual orientation and gender identity research should be conducted in other parts of the country with government and private sector workers and with a mix of organizations that foster the different perspectives toward sexual minority inclusion (Rocco, Landorf, and Delgado, 2009). The facets of sexual orientation and gender identity can be examined also using qualitative and quantitative measures as in a survey sent to workers in specific industries. As progress on LGBT issues continues at a fast pace, issues related to workplace climate for LGBT issues are fluid and dynamic. For example, areas ripe for research are the effect of an employee coming out during the selection process, an employee coming out after starting a new position, the effect on productivity when LGBT employees are open about their sexuality, and the effect on collegiality when employees are open about sexuality. Specifically, these issues need to be considered in male-dominated fields, with quickly changing cultures and policies. For example, the U.S. military no longer condones discrimination in its policies. Surveys of military personnel showed the majority of military personnel were either neutral or positive about changing the "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy, with those having knowingly served with LGBT personnel having more positive feelings on the topic (Westat, 2010). In sectors and industries such as this, opinions and practices are changing quickly, leading to the need for continual investigation to understand how leaders can best foster inclusive environments.

Another area to investigate is to examine the factors that predict long-term motivation and persistence by allies. Brooks and Edwards (2009) and Gedro, Cervero, and Johnson-Bailey (2004) provide insights into some steps that activists take to improve climate and culture. However, a systematic study examining the role of both activists and HR in improving organizational climate and culture for LGBT workers could prove helpful for practice. Additionally, research should focus on coalition building as a way to improve workplace culture and climate.

The research on compensation disparities for gay men points to a need for additional research to understand the reasons for the disparities and to understand how HRD professionals can help prevent them. Other promising areas for research relate to the implementation of work-life benefits that allow for leaves of absence and flextime. Lastly, although domestic partner benefits have seen widespread adoption among large, publicly traded companies, we know that adoption has been slower in governmental agencies (Githens, 2008) and among small employers (HRCF, 2009). Changes in these policies in governmental agencies tie back to complicated public policy debates. However, research among small employers could be fruitful in helping HR professionals and activists understand the antecedents present in small organizations that offer benefits.

Gaps in research on career development and LGBT employees are many, and include research on LGBT employees' career development and mobility in different types of occupations

and careers. Research that specifically focuses on the experiences of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender employees in the workplace is also needed.

As noted earlier, research on LGBT issues in workplace training has focused on education for HIV/AIDS prevention among sex workers and healthcare workers. These two different types of employees demonstrate the fact that the concepts of workers and the workplace are broad; as is the concept of workplace training. Research has yet to take off in this area, and opportunities abound for future research on workplace education and LGBT issues such as cultural competence on LGBT issues for workplace trainers, and the development of curriculum that supports LGBT inclusion in the workplace.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Creating an inclusive and diverse workforce is relevant to the HRD profession in a sometimes-hostile political climate where the rhetoric can be centered on the purported immorality of LGBT people as a justification for the denial of civil rights. In this climate, HRD scholars and scholar-practitioners charged with increasing diversity because of legal mandates or moral correctness are searching for guidance. It is important to note that sexual orientation has been, and continues to be, mentioned in presentations and publications related to general diversity training, issues of gender in HRD, and women's career development.

We intend to stimulate thinking and challenge traditionally held views that have dismissed LGBT issues as a pathological condition of interest primarily to healthcare professionals—an organizational undiscussable—rather than a legitimate issue for HRD. In line with the precepts of critical human resource development (HRD) we share a purpose which “works towards reform aligned with purposes of justice, equity, and participation;” knowledge which “is understood to be contested;” inquiry which focuses “on power issues seeking to understand how socio-political processes” shape how we understand cognition, identity, and meaning; and, methods which “are practices that expose and challenge prevailing economic ideologies and power relations constituting organizational structures of inequity” (Fenwick, 2005, p. 228-229). Sexuality, as an invisible social identity in the workplace, has implications for both research and practice (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Ward & Winstanley, 2005). Additionally, in an environment where organizations need the productivity and full participation of all types of talent, this issue is a bottom-line business concern as well.

This article provides a summary of the small core of research from which to build and provides several fruitful areas for future research. The overarching theme from this body of work is that while many HR professionals are sincere and want to address these issues, they have often reacted or failed to act rather than provide proactive leadership on LGBT issues.



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