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**SPECIAL ISSUE:**

*“Conflicts, Collaborations, and LGBTQ Cultural Work in Adult Education and Human Resource Development”* by Thomas V. Bettinger (Editor)

Click on an article to start reading

**EDITORIAL**

*To Impose It We Must: A Retrospective on LGBTQ Locomotion in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*

Robert J. Hill

**ARTICLES**

*Adult Learning in the Queer Nation:  
A Foucauldian Analysis of Educational Strategies for Social Change*  
Wayland Walker

*Capitalism, Identity Politics, and Queerness Converge:  
LGBT Employee Resource Groups*  
Rod P. Githens

*Efforts of Bifurcation and Liberation:  
Deconstructing the Story of a Turn-of-the Century Lesbian, Part One*  
Jo A. Tyler

**PERSPECTIVES ON PRACTICE**

*A Personal Narrative of LGBT Identity and Activism*  
Julie Gedro

**PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING**

*From the Sidelines to Center Stage: Opportunities to Discover Voice and Empowerment through Web 2.0 and New Media for LGBTQ Adult Learners*  
Kathleen P. King

**BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEWS**

*Transgender Workplace Diversity: Policy Tools, Training Issues and Communication Strategies for HR and Legal Professionals*, By Jillian T. Weiss  
Joyce McNickles

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## CONTENTS

Click on an article title to start reading

### EDITORIAL

To Impose It We Must: A Retrospective on LGBTQ Locomotion in Adult Education and Human Resource Development

Robert J. Hill.....3

### ARTICLES

Adult Learning in the Queer Nation: A Foucauldian Analysis of Educational Strategies for Social Change

Wayland Walker.....10

Capitalism, Identity Politics, and Queerness Converge: LGBT Employee Resource Groups

Rod P. Githens .....18

Efforts of Bifurcation and Liberation: Deconstructing the Story of a Turn-of-the Century Lesbian, Part One

Jo A. Tyler.....32

### PERSPECTIVES ON PRACTICE

A Personal Narrative of LGBT Identity and Activism

Julie Gedro.....51

### PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING

From the Sidelines to Center Stage: Opportunities to Discover Voice and Empowerment through Web 2.0 and New Media for LGBTQ Adult Learners

Kathleen P. King.....55

### BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEWS

*Transgender Workplace Diversity: Policy Tools, Training Issues and Communication Strategies for HR and Legal Professionals*, By Jillian T. Weiss

Joyce McNickles .....65

<b>ABOUT SPECIAL ISSUE EDITOR: THOMAS V. BETTINGER.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>NEWS AND NOTES.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>FOR YOUR INFORMATION.....</b>	<b>73</b>

## EDITORIAL

### **To Impose It We Must: A Retrospective on LGBTQ Locomotion in Adult Education and Human Resource Development**

We continually retell our lives. This maxim reminds me of the assertion I made in 2003 at the opening of the first Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) and Allies PreConference, “In the future, may all comrades who attend to LGBTQ matters be inundated with multiple imaginings and continual retelling of our lives, our impacts, and our transformations” (Hill, 2003, p. 20). In fairness, I have to add that these words were uttered after a decade of struggle against taboo talk and coercive invisibility to having our voices heard within the field of adult education. To be doubly fair, I must add that we were aided and encouraged throughout this decade by numerous adult educators who conspired with us to bring our presence and our many contributions to light. The journey to the first PreConference thus began in 1993, when several of us organized the first LGBTQ&A Caucus at the Penn State University, the site of AERC that year. One of those who stepped forward to co-found the Caucus, and has continued to sustain us, was Dr. Libby Tisdell (Penn State University-Harrisburg). Much happened to further our presence and to open a space for LGBTQ contributions to the field between 1993 with the founding of the Caucus and 2003 with the establishment of the first PreConference. Equally, the growth of Queer scholarship has continued unabated from 2003 to the present.

Three significant moments define Queer voice and vision in the history of the field: (a) the formation in 1993 of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Allies Caucus (LGBTQ&AC), (b) the growing number of presentations at the official AERC meetings since the first from a gay perspective (Hill, 1994), which was followed by the first paper published in a major journal in the field (Hill, 1995), and (c) the first Queer PreConference, sponsored by LGBTQ&AC at the 46<sup>th</sup> AERC, San Francisco, 2003. So significant is this history, Hill, Grace and Associates (in press) will publish an extensive text of papers covering this period. Missing in much of this early story is the presence of human resource and organizational development. The recent *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, edited by Rocco, Gedro, and Kormanik (2009), illustrates significant progress.

### **Queers in Motion**

The history of this locomotion, a word I have selected intentionally, has been told on several occasions (Grace & Hill, 2004; Hill, 2003; Hill, 2008a) and thus seems unnecessary to explore in depth here. I would, however, be remiss in my obligation of introducing the reader to this topic without mentioning a few people who have provided the energy, creativity, stamina, and most importantly LGBTQ organizational leadership during this long haul. They include Drs. André Grace (The University of Alberta), Julie Gedro (Empire State), and Ms. Brenda (deceased) and Wanda Henson (of Camp Sister Spirit), and recently Dr. Thom Bettinger (a graduate of Penn State). Along the way, graduate students too have played a critical leadership role, especially including the efforts of Kris Wells (The University of

Alberta), and numerous others. Of course to name a select few is always risky because it inevitably omits others, from whom I seek leniency in judgment. This essay is a metaphorical pebble, thrown so as to skip across the surface of a pond, touching only key spots.

I like the word “locomotion” because it implies the power to move from one place to another. This movement is not simply geographical, but assumes a myriad of dimensions. It bears itself out in biographical, ideological, epistemological, spiritual, affective, and other domains too numerous to list here. It is a history of movement from margins closer to the center—with all of the consolations, and desolations (e.g., unintended consequences), that attend this movement.

### **Moving Into the Cross-Hairs**

Of course, there are costs for all who locomote into view, including the price paid for “coming out” and backlash in organizational and other settings (Hill, 2009). In February 2009 I personally felt the sting that can result from visibility when Georgia legislators expressed their deep disdain, during the 2009 legislative session of the House of Representatives, for those of us who teach subjects such as human sexuality and Queer Theory. In fact, I was singled out as paradigmatic of what is wrong with liberal education today. Conservatives furthered the attack in the *Christian Index* (2002), the official newspaper of the Georgia Baptist Convention, which has an average circulation of 62,000. In this newspaper, a House representative was reported to challenge “Georgia Baptists to help in a brewing battle over the controversial courses being offered through the University of Georgia’s College of Education” (*State representative warns of sex classes being taught at taxpayer expense*, 2009, para. 3). The article continues, “universities are to provide the opportunity for a higher education but [they] stray over the line with studies on controversial moral behaviors” (para. 6). The legislator distributed a newsletter to “friends and neighbors” that stated, “there is a professor at UGA that has confirmed and verified courses in ‘Queer Theory’ among other things” (Byrd, 2009, lines 9-10). And, the legislator has refused to retract false allegations against me, despite my exoneration by the University of Georgia’s Office of Legal Affairs after a painful, intensive, and extensive investigation of my academic career. I mention this experience only because I believe it is in many ways part of a “collective autobiography” (Jones/Olomo, 2008, p. 195) where storytelling is at once specific and individual, while simultaneously representative of group realities (Cudjoe, 1990 as cited in Jones/Olomo, 2008, p. 195).

### **To Impose We Must**

Recently I read in an issue of *New Horizons of Adult Education and Human Resource Development* words that explained how I felt in 1993. Baptiste (2008) articulated it precisely, “Educators, by necessity, are either supporters or opposers of particular virtues. There is no sitting on the fence. As educators we may have some choice over *what* we impose and *how* we impose it, but to impose, we must” (p. 19). At the time, I knew that it was a journey that had to be undertaken. If I, and others like me in the field, were to be fully ourselves, fence-sitting was not an option. I had come to believe the tenet expounded by Faure (1972), who in proposing reform of the entire learning enterprise, called for personal liberation. I had been

well trained that lifelong education included a libratory dimension stemming from the works of Lindeman, Illich, Freire, and Newman, among many others. Their writings brought me to the position that activism was the practice of adult education (Hill, 2004). It made sense to me that “education should contribute to every person's complete development—mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality” (*UNESCO Task Force*, 1999). If a role of adult education was to empower learners to be, to belong, to become, to change, and to behave through agency, we were deeply off the mark on this arena.

A presentation I delivered at the University of Tennessee, AERC (1994), titled “Heterosexism Discourse: A Sociohistorical Perspective,” seemed to breach the levee holding us back. As a result of encouraging responses that I received (and denunciations) to this presentation, I authored a review of the literature (Hill, 1995) pointing to the fact that adult educators had, wittingly or unwittingly, made choices over *what* to impose and *how* to impose it—and heterosexism was the undeniable choice. Heterosexism, the attitude that all people are, or should be, heterosexual dominated the discourse of the field. It often denied, denigrated, and stigmatized non-heterosexual forms of behavior, relationships, and communities (See Herek, 1990).

### **Breaking the Grip of Heterosexism**

The year 2003 marked the AERC’s first Queer PreConference and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AERC LGBTQ&A Caucus, held at San Francisco State University (titled, “Queer Histories: Exploring Fugitive Forms of Social Knowledge”). This was followed by annual conferences at the University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada (“LGBTQ Resilience and Inclusion. Transgressing Adult Education to Be, Become, and Belong”); the University of Georgia, Athens, GA (“Hear Me Out: Queer Narratives, Moral/izing Discourses and the Academy”); the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN (“Never Far Away: Separation, Subjugation, and Violence in LGBTQ Lives. Tropes of the Fence”); Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, (“Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Issues in Organizational Settings”); and The University of Missouri-St. Louis (“Transcending The Rhetoric Of ‘Family Values’: Celebrating Families Of Choice And Families Of Value”). In all of these, the lion’s share of presentations centered on adult education outside of human resources and organizational development (HROD), areas that seemed to remain the poor cousins in the field of LGBTQ studies.

A review of LGBTQ-centered papers presented at the official Adult Education Research Conferences over the past half-decade shows about a dozen presentations that mention or are directly related to LGBTQ issues; two are specifically HROD-centered. During the past 5 years, there have been 47 PreConference papers related to the topic, 1 keynote, and 1 workshop. A growing number have papers touched on HROD, the first by Gedro (2003) on lesbians in the workplace and the most recently a paper by Brainard (2008) on transgender issues in organizational settings.

## **Intersectionality: HROD, LGBTQ, and Adult Learning and Education (ALE)**

It was not until I designed a graduate level course at the University of Georgia in 2004 titled “LGBTQ Issues in Organizational Settings: What Professionals Should Know and Do” that I came to understand the paucity of work at the intersection of adult learning and education (ALE), sexual orientation and gender expression, and human resource management and organizational development. This led me to edit a sourcebook on the topic, that appeared two years later (Hill, 2006a) on challenging homophobia and heterosexism *specifically in organizational settings*. A fundamental question asked was “What’s it like to be Queer here?” (Hill, 2006b). The subtitle of the graduate level course, “What Professionals Should Know and Do,” was the beginning point for this text. The sourcebook became the centerpiece of an LGBTQ&A PreConference in 2007 at Mount Saint Vincent University where many of the chapter authors presented scholarship on the topic. The PreConference allowed us to retell our stories from an HROD frame.

A more thorough accounting of LGBTQ themes in key journals in both ALE and HROD, as well as an analysis of the official AERC and AERC PreConferences, would surely demonstrate that the road *has* lead onward—and it would show far fewer fence-sitters. Rather, a growing number of scholars in our shared fields are not just sustaining the motion, but are generating new energy and bringing re/newed vitality to the study of this critical issue.

### **Do We Have a Future?**

Asked recently about my thoughts and hopes for the future, the lyrics of Bob Dylan’s (1963) *The Times They Are A-Changin’* came to mind,

Come gather 'round people  
Wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters  
Around you have grown...  
If your time to you  
Is worth savin'  
Then you better start swimmin'  
Or you'll sink like a stone  
For the times they are a-changin'

I believe that we better start swimmin' or we'll sink like a stone, in at least two arenas, (a) becoming inclusive rather than exclusive by engaging in intersectionality, and (b) supporting—even encouraging—the contemporary movement of troubling identity.

Regarding the former, intersectionality recognizes that most of us have very complex identities and it is hard to say what is most influential in our lives: sexual orientation, gender identity, race, gender, ethnicity, able-bodied-ness, class, religion, language, age, and more. In the practice of ALE within HROD we must facilitate planned change to include a larger strategy to create improved organizations for everyone—places where all individuals feel included, appreciated, recognized, and encouraged to add value by participating in the total

life of the organization. It is a strategy that explicitly rejects the notion that diversity is only about people of color, women, LGBTQ individuals, or Affirmative Action (Hill, 2009).

We must build spaces

where the many and varied contributions of *everyone* are used, *because of*, rather than in spite of, their sexual orientation, gender identity, class, marital status, color, ethnicity, age, experience, styles of learning, thinking and communicating, religion and spirituality, language, educational attainment, and management style. (Hill, 2009, p. 48)

In regard to the latter, there is a new generation that is clearly rejecting (deregulating) “identities such as gay or lesbian [and this includes a] clear generational shift toward a post-racial and post-ethnic moment” (Hill, 2008b, p. 87). Whether this is an ephemeral or a permanent movement has yet to be seen. It is about being the non-gay gay and the gay non-gay simultaneously in a postmodern twist. A key is how we are to respond to the initiatives of (mostly) a younger generation who have assumed a post-identity way of living in the world. Clearly, our strengths since 1992 have been through creating an identifiable “us” and a collective “we” as LGBT people. But we must listen to those who see that the waters around us have changed.

The pebble we skipped across the pond at the beginning of this essay may keep touching the water’s surface in forward motion, or it may sink like a stone. I believe we can—no, we must—sustain multiple imaginings, and we can continue retelling our lives, our impacts, and our transformations in new ways. How we take up the issues will determine the future of LGBTQ presence and contributions to the field.

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**ADULT LEARNING IN THE QUEER NATION:  
A FOUCAULDIAN ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES  
FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

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**Abstract**

Adult education for social change can occur within social movements, and the fight for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer (LGBTQ) rights has included educational strategies designed to challenge heterosexist and homophobic systems of power. This article explores how the Queer Nation movement of the early 1990s deployed a Foucauldian (1976/1990) reading of power-relations to create educational interventions that allowed relatively small numbers of activists to affect powerful social change. By analyzing how power functioned within American society, queer activists designed specific interventions, which, while often humorous, sarcastic, and lighthearted, were nonetheless effective in disrupting prejudices because they demonstrated the absurdity of heterosexist beliefs. In making the theoretical move from object of hatred to subject who resists oppression, activists in the Queer Nation movement changed American culture and contributed to the social and legal gains made by LGBTQ people over the next two decades.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people are one group that has faced profound legal and social discrimination and exclusion in the United States. This oppression is based upon the politics of disgust and contagion (Eskridge, 2008) and homophobic discourse that positions heterosexuality as the “central gender and sexual category in the generation of power, authority, and social domination” (Hill, 1996, p. 275). As LGBT people we have adopted “a trajectory of active and passive resistance to the dominant group’s attempts to colonise their lifeworlds” (Hill, 1996, p. 256); we have resisted by answering questions about group identity and our place in society. We created the queer, “taking back” a term historically used to denigrate us and adding a “Q” to the LGBT acronym. When asked who we are, some of us now say that we are queer.

The term “queer” is intentionally ambiguous. It has been “employed as an umbrella term for the indeterminate array of identities and differences that characterize persons in relation to sex, sexuality, gender, desire and expression” (Grace & Hill, 2004, p. 167). But the word can be used both as a single signifier for the entire LGBT movement and as a signifier for some inherent indeterminacy. When a person refuses to be positioned within the heterosexual/homosexual binary but maintains “identities [that] are always multiple, fluid, mobile, contingent, unstable (labile), and fragmented” (Hill, 2006, p. 4), that person is properly understood as queer. Today the term has become accepted in some academic discourse and has been expanded to encompass an entire theoretical perspective, Queer Theory (Dilley, 1999; Sullivan, 2003). In adult

education, it has been utilized to conceptualize queer activism as a practice that is both critical and postmodern, simultaneously advocating “for empowerment and development of voice” and refusing “to be positioned as solitary and intact. Queer is a category that no one can ever fully own or possess because it requires shifting identity to practice” (Hill, 2004, p. 87).

But before “queer” was widely accepted in academic discourse, the term was deployed on the streets, as a part of a cultural and educational movement to empower oppressed LGBT people in the face of blatant discrimination and exclusion. In the early 1990s, “queer” was used as part of the “indigenous gay discourse [that] emerged at the intersection of private spaces and the public sphere [used to] challenge and trespass across the boundaries of the dominant culture” (Hill, 1996, p. 256). The term was employed with its double meaning intact, as both a single word for all sexual minorities and as a word for an unusual LGBT person, one who was willing to stand up, eschew the closet, and confront oppression directly. It was used to describe the Queer Nation (QN), an activist movement for social change that erupted simultaneously in cities across America as queer folk, sick of suffering oppression in silence, insisted on speaking out and against discrimination. Adult education is a discipline with a longstanding commitment to education for social justice for oppressed minority groups (Grace & Hill, 2004).

### **Historical Context of the Queer Nation Movement**

In 1990, there were virtually no “out” celebrities; there were no effective treatments for HIV/AIDS; gay bashing was common, with no public outcry, and consensual private adult homosexual activity was illegal in many states. Anti-gay sentiment was open and loud, and bigots felt free to condemn gay men and lesbians personally and in the press or at public events. What has now come to be labeled as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer (LGBTQ) community responded with a national groundswell, including the formation of dispersed chapters of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP), which focused on HIV-related issues, and of QN, which focused on LGBTQ civil rights, empowerment in the face of oppression, and visibility. These groups’ educational interventions, based upon a Foucauldian reading of power-relations (Halperin, 1995), allowed a relatively small number of activists to challenge dominant discourses and to facilitate rapid social change.

For a number of reasons, 1990 was a turning point. *The Advocate*, a national gay rights magazine, declared 1990 “The Year of the Queer,” as the gay civil rights movement erupted in protest all over the nation (Shilts, 1991). The great and beloved gay gadfly, Larry Kramer (1989), had for years urged LGBTQ people to become activists, but the movement was galvanized at last by an anonymous pamphlet circulated at gay pride in New York city in June of 1990 (Anonymous, 1990). A new type of activism emerged that Shilts (1991), writing contemporaneously, described as one that

... struck suddenly and tumultuously after a dolorous and drowsy decade in which the homosexual rights agenda was overwhelmed by the preoccupation with morbidity and mortality. Its tenor is both humorous and insolent; its rhetoric careens between the trenchant and the fatuous. Its purpose is to be, beyond all else, insurgent, even menacing. (p. 32)

I experienced firsthand this groundswell and many of the events that led to great cultural and legal breakthroughs in the 1990s, after which overt expression of homophobia and heterosexism became, in many circles, less acceptable. The world changed in the middle 1990s. People living with HIV stopped dying as rapidly because there were finally more effective treatments. Many of the more blatant expressions of heterosexist privilege were mitigated, as most Americans, confronted with their prejudice, seemed to learn that it was not okay, for examples, to openly gloat over the deaths of people with AIDS or to claim that God wanted gay people to die horrible deaths.

I was not an educator then, but was rather an anthropologist (Walker, 1993). I cannot pretend any sort of objectivity on that period in American history because I was involved in many activist protests and events in my home territories of Atlanta, Augusta, and especially Athens, Georgia. I am now a witness to a history that was never written down, quite intentionally, because activists in the early 1990s genuinely believed that straight people would and could kill, imprison, or otherwise harm those that could be identified as Queer Nationalists, even if we never did anything illegal in any of our protests-- which, for most activists such as myself, was true. In the words of Anonymous (1990),

How can I tell you. How can I convince you, brother, sister that your life is in danger: That everyday you wake up alive, relatively happy, and a functioning human being, you are committing a rebellious act. You as an alive and functioning queer are a revolutionary.

There is nothing on this planet that validates, protects or encourages your existence. It is a miracle you are standing here reading these words. You should by all rights be dead. Don't be fooled, straight people own the world and the only reason you have been spared is you're smart, lucky or a fighter. (p. 1)

The wave of activism that shook the nation in the early 1990s was singularly effective in the history of the movement for full civil rights for LGBTQ people. The goals of QN— more visibility, repeal of the sodomy laws, out LGBTQ celebrities, and more nuanced portrayals of gay peoples' lives in the media—have all, to some degree, since been achieved. Something barely dared imagined in 1990, gay marriage, has appeared in three U.S. states and several foreign nations. As both a witness and an adult educator, I am now prepared to theoretically unpack the reasons that this period of activism was so effective. This article examines how Foucault's (1976/1990) notions of power and social change, filtered from the academy and into the street, informed QN activities and allowed a relatively small number of activists to affect striking social change. LGBTQ academics did the analysis, and the people on the street took "high theory" ideas and made them into potent instruments for social change.

### **Foucauldian Theory and Analysis of Heterosexist Power**

Foucault's (1976/1990) notion of power is very different from traditional analyses of power relations, in which one group has one power and the other does not. Foucault posited power as omnipresent, and as found only in its application:

Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations.... There is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and the ruled at the root of power relations and serving as a general matrix... (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 94)

Thus, under a Foucauldian reading of power, power exists not in hypothetical structures but in concrete applications. “[F]or Foucault, unlike liberationists, resistance is inseparable from power rather than being opposed to it” (Sullivan, 2003, p. 42). The proper question for an advocate of social change is not “What is the nature of power?” but rather “How does power function to maintain these oppressive circumstances?” Understanding power, and the manner in which power functions, can inform activists, who can act within their own spheres of life and experience, because power is everywhere. “Between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority....” (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 98).

If social power, including the power that oppresses and the power that resists, are found in their application, the expressions of power can be described in terms of streams of discourse or, more simply, discourses. There was and is a heterosexist discourse that proclaims, through its various speakers, artifacts, and channels, that only relationships between biologically-defined men and women are socially acceptable. But there are discourses opposed to that heterosexism, in which LGBTQ people live their lives and resist in their speech and behavior, and which Hill (1996) has characterized as “fugitive knowledge” or discourse which “since it is constructed outside of the dominant social discourse... escapes the control of privileged spectators” (p. 254). Social power, then, expresses itself in specific and conflicting discourses, which Foucault labeled tactically polyvalent:

[W]e must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable.... [W]e must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies.... (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 100)

In Marxist theory, there is often a singular oppressor, a bourgeois class that dictates how the world will be. For Foucault, there is no single speaker, and, because discourse arises in contested relations, the statements within a stream of discourse are less coherent. A careful Foucauldian reading of a discourse, such as the discourse of heterosexism, can allow those who understand the contested power relations to effectively challenge that discourse, by targeting points of weakness within oppressive discourses.

Halperin (1995) provided a succinct analysis of the sort of Foucauldian reading of heterosexist discourse that QN activists undertook. First, activists looked at how LGBTQ people are described by heterosexist speakers: “The homosexual” is simultaneously “(1) a social misfit, (2) an unnatural monster or freak, (3) a moral failure, and (4) a sexual pervert” (Halperin, 1995, p. 46). This analysis is useful, if only to provide categories for refuting the dominant discourse and for describing inconsistencies in such statements of prejudice. An activist might introduce him or herself as queer in order to refute these descriptions within specific sets of power

relations, under the theory that it is easier to demonize gay people if one believes one has never met a gay person. It is harder to imagine that gay people are social misfits and freaks when one's co-worker or brother or mail carrier or social worker is out and proud of LGBTQ culture.

The real meat of the analysis is found, however, not in the analysis of the categories that oppress, but in the analysis of the categories that empower. Halperin (1995) described the “crucially *empowering* incoherence” of the category “heterosexual” (p. 46) and defined heterosexuality as follows:

(1) a social norm, (2) a perfectly natural condition into which everyone is born and everyone grows up, if no catastrophic accident interferes with normal, healthy development, (3) a highly laudable accomplishment that one is entitled to take pride in and for which one deserves no small amount of personal and social credit, and (4) a frighteningly unstable and precarious state that can easily be overthrown—by such contingent events as coming into contact with a gay or lesbian role model, being seduced by a member of the same sex during adolescence, hearing homosexuality spoken of too often, or having a gay man as a primary school teacher.... (Halperin, 1995, p. 46)

This last factor is a key for understanding how social activists can change the culture for the better. This is the point of leverage that allows a few activists to change the world: do the hard work of social theory, figure out the way that the oppressive discourses function, and target their most absurd aspect. When heterosexism is violent, this violence is based upon fear, and at least part of that fear is that if LGBTQ people are not stopped, everyone will become gay.

The proposition is ludicrous. If homosexuality were contagious, we would all be already gay. And, while the most prejudiced in any society are not well known for their intelligence, oppressive discourses that are so incoherent, irrational, and absurd are easily challenged and overthrown if a few activists are willing to take the calculated risk of the possible violent incoherence of bigots. The strategy is simple: Identify the discursive fault line; engage in educational activities that prove to anybody willing to think that, for example, talking with a gay person or seeing two men kiss will not make you gay; win over the thinking majority, and then the speakers of prejudice will be the marginalized actors—not for what they are, but for what they do and say that is socially unacceptable and wrong.

### **Educational Strategies in the Queer Nation**

The QN movement was the move from object to subject—LGBTQ people moved from being objects of derision, hatred, and oppressions to subjects who defied their oppressors and described their own lives, intentionally and often theatrically. In locating the “Pressure points, the fault lines, the most advantageous sites within the political economy of heterosexist/homophobic discourses for disrupting and resisting it” (Halperin, 1995, p. 48), street activists and academics alike deployed strategies including appropriation, resignification, exposure, and demystification. That is, QN activists engaged in planned “actions” informed by strategies that included:

*Shop Ins* - Under slogans including “Don’t revolutionize, accessorize,” activists wearing QN t-shirts and holding hands would descend upon the “apotheosis of heterosexual culture, the suburban shopping mall” (Shilts, 1991) to, quite simply, go shopping. The money used might be stamped with “you have just interacted with a lesbian,” but, other than the t-shirts, buttons, and the large groups of lesbians communally sorting through lingerie, these events were simply an opportunity to go shopping with friends.

*Queer Ins* - Sometimes, an action involved simply showing up, en masse, at some place where queer folk were generally not out. A bar that catered primarily to heterosexuals might, for example, find that virtually all of its patrons on a certain night were wearing QN t-shirts and pink triangles.

*Letters to the Editor* - When a speaker of prejudice was outspoken against LGBTQ people and rights, QN activists convened and wrote letters. Because QN activists were generally quite literate and willing to be sarcastic and funny, these letters were often published.

*Picketing* - When a local newspaper published an editorial urging, say, the “reeducation” of LGBTQ people into heterosexuals, various chapters of QN, often joined by ACT-UP and even local gay churches, would march. Offenders received the chant of “Shame! Shame! Shame!” from hundreds of voices. The media covered these events because we usually invited them.

*Targeted Protests* - Some acts of prejudice required specific, recurring counter-discourse. When a local restaurant chain in Georgia fired employees for being gay and lesbian, large numbers of QN activists converged, over many months, to sit in booths together, order one order of communal French fries, pray, and sing “We shall overcome.”

*Kiss-Ins* - If a heterosexist speaker really distinguished themselves with their anti-gay rhetoric, that speaker might have to watch a dozen or so same-sex couples kiss one another on their doorstep.

*Protective Patrols* - Gay bashing resulted in patrols of “brothers and sisters” who would call the police at the first sign of trouble on their walkie-talkies. While these were not vigilante groups, many QN members did undertake martial arts training, and patrol members were dressed to intimidate—often in the usual QN black t-shirt and combat boots, which were a sort of uniform.

In addition to these concrete sorts of “actions,” the theoretical move from object (of hatred) to subject (who builds community, who protects “brothers and sisters”) also entailed a willingness to resist oppression directly. This, too, was a theoretical move. If power is diffused and is found in its application, it is deployed by specific actors. It is therefore possible to trace hate back to its source and to challenge that actor directly. Many LGBTQ people in the days before 1990 had been socialized to accept oppression, even violent oppression, without complaint. A story from Anonymous (1990) is illustrative:

Tompkins Square Park, Labor Day. At an annual outdoor concert/drag show, a group of gay men were harassed by teens carrying sticks. In the midst of thousands of gay men and lesbians, these straight boys beat two gay men to the ground, then stood around triumphantly laughing amongst themselves. The emcee was alerted and warned the crowd from the stage, "You girls be careful. When you dress up it drives the boys crazy," as if it were a practical joke inspired by what the victims were wearing rather than a pointed attack on anyone and everyone at that event. (p. 9)

After QN, LGBTQ people were less likely to stand passively by, and more likely to defend themselves. But what if the oppressor was actually an LGBTQ person? Closeted homosexuals were in many instances the worst of the oppressors, as they channeled their apparent self-loathing into acts that damaged the LGBTQ community. Closeted news anchors who followed every gay-positive story with a "counterpoint" from an extremist conservative and closeted politicians who worked against the community's interests were numbered among the worst offenders. For some QN activists, who had read the many stories about high suicide rates among LGBTQ youth and attributed that mortality rate to the fact that most such youths thought they were alone in the world, privileged celebrities who remained closeted despite their fortune and success were also oppressors of a more silent sort.

Two other types of actions by QN grew out of this new unwillingness to accept oppression from closeted homosexuals. The first was a new refusal to accept such people at community events or functions. If you worked against gay and lesbian interests as a politician on Capitol Hill and then went to your regular gay bar in the evening, after 1990 somebody would probably throw a drink on you. If you were a celebrity who denied in the press that you were gay and you then showed up at an LGBTQ venue, you would be told that you were not welcome.

The second—and the more controversial activity—was "outing." In "outing," homosexuals who worked actively against LGBTQ interests in politics had their sexuality openly discussed in the queer press. This was a sort of atomic bomb of activism, threatened far more often than delivered because of the resulting collateral damage and social fallout. Ironically, "outing" has often been used to characterize the entire QN movement, even though the practice was never designed to be used against, say, small town closeted lesbians or gay men who might lose their livelihood if exposed. The few "outings" that occurred were, more properly, educational events aimed at a select few individuals with money and power: if you had political power, and you were a closeted homosexual, you could no longer advocate for anti-gay laws and policies without risking exposure.

**Conclusion: "AN ARMY OF LOVERS CANNOT LOSE"**

(from Anonymous, 1990, p. 2)

The QN movement represented a decentralized, national groundswell of resistance against heterosexism and oppression of LGBTQ peoples. Anger and loss motivated activists to take risks and to agitate for social change. After QN, the prophecy of the sisters in the section titled "Anger" of "Queers Read This" (Anonymous, 1990) proved true:

The strong sisters told the brothers that there were two important things to remember about the coming revolutions, the first is that we will get our asses kicked. The second, is that we will win. (p. 3)

If the world has changed, it is at least in part because Foucauldian (1976/1990) theory worked. Power is immanent, and resistance is possible at every level, from the most individual to the most social. QN vanished in the middle 1990s as many of its activists perished of AIDS and, as society became more accepting, queer rage cooled. But that's okay: all movement demands were, to some degree, met. Many LGBTQ celebrities are out now. There is less violence. The U.S. sodomy laws are no more. In a few places, queer folk can actually get married. The world is a little less oppressive. Adult education for social change worked. We won.

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## **CAPITALISM, IDENTITY POLITICS, AND QUEERNESS CONVERGE: LGBT EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS**

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### **Abstract**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employee resource groups have brought about substantial organizational change within corporations. Capitalist structures have enabled these changes to occur more quickly in the private sector than within the public sector. In this article, I explore how capitalism has converged with two approaches of organizing around sexuality: identity politics and queerness. As a result of this convergence, human resource development has occurred at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. Due to current forms of capitalism, employers have a need to keep employees happy and enable them to seek meaning through their jobs. As a result, LGBT employees and their allies have seized upon the opportunity by creating spaces that enable social support and working toward organizational change. Danger and promises of employee resource groups are also considered.

Corporations take a variety of positions on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues, ranging from openly hostile to openly advocating for LGBT persons (Rocco, Delgado, & Landorf, 2008). In response to these environments, LGBT employee groups have formed to provide social support/networking opportunities to workers and provide a platform from which LGBT people and others can work toward organizational development and change within their workplaces. These groups take multiple forms: formally organized, informally organized, recognized by the employing organization, and existing outside the employing organization (e.g., in unions; Githens & Aragon, 2007). The number of LGB groups in Fortune 1000 companies (i.e., the top 1000 publicly-traded U.S. companies, based on revenue) grew from 2 in 1980 to 69 in 1998 (Raeburn, 2004b).<sup>1</sup> Employee resource groups (ERGs)<sup>2</sup> are formally sanctioned groups that organize around a shared identity or interest to organize programs, encourage discussion, seek organizational changes, advise their employers, and/or increase organizational effectiveness through addressing their shared interest. ERGs result in human resource development (HRD) at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. On the individual level, development occurs for members within the groups as they live more integrated lives and learn to facilitate organizational change. For those outside the groups, development

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<sup>1</sup> As of June 2008, the Human Rights Campaign database ([www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)) lists 160 employee groups in Fortune 1000 companies.

<sup>2</sup> The groups are also commonly called “affinity groups” or “employee networks.”

occurs as ERGs' formal and informal awareness activities reach those throughout the workplace (e.g., creating awareness about LGBT issues through training programs, education campaigns, and information discussions). On the organization level, change occurs as ERGs bring policy changes, changes in organizational culture, and ultimately improve employee-employer relations. ERGs promote development at the societal level through changing people's ideas about sexuality and gender identity, which results in wider societal appreciation for diversity and leads to changes in public policy.

Within HRD, many voices have called for broadening the scope of the field to include societal issues and the development of more humane and ethical workplaces (e.g., Bierema & Cseh, 2003; Bierema & D'Abundo, 2003; Fenwick, 2005; Hatcher, 2006; O'Donnell, 2007). ERGs provide one such location for this type of development. However, ERGs balance their activist agendas with the need to contribute to the organization. Corporate motivation for supporting these efforts is not necessarily altruistic and is often enabled by the capitalistic goal of improving organizational effectiveness (Gedro, 2007). Influenced by approaches that focus both on LGBT-specific identities and broader conceptions of sexuality, known as queer theory, these employee groups have continued the long tradition of advancing LGBT issues through capitalism. Through a conceptual and historical discussion, I argue that these groups resulted from the unique convergence of capitalism and two sometimes-opposing social organizing strategies: queer politics and identity politics. Although these groups exist in various forms and in multiple types of organizations, I focus on formally-recognized ERGs within for-profit corporations (for a discussion of other types of groups, see Githens & Aragon, 2007). This article's purpose is to explore the ways in which the productive tensions between capitalism, identity politics, and queerness have manifested themselves in LGBT ERGs and created structures and activities that result in development for individuals, organizations, and societies.

In modern Western culture, before the creation of the concept of homosexuality in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, people who had sex with others of the same gender were merely engaging in sinful behavior (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997). With the creation of homosexuality as a new pathological condition to label those individuals, they were no longer merely regular people engaging in sinful acts, they were a distinct group of people. Shortly thereafter, the formation of formal and informal groups based on this sexual identity was a subversive effort to exert power and shift a negative attribute into a powerful collective force by taking advantage of this pathological identity (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997; Foucault, 1978). As I explain later, the evolution of capitalism has provided the structures through which this unique identity has emerged (D'Emilio, 1993). These forces have resulted in numerous advances in the acceptance of LGBT individuals in society. However, some have argued that LGBT identity politics has reached its limits and that LGBT individuals should argue for individual liberties rather than equality as a minority group (e.g., Yoshino, 2006). Others advocate queer and universalizing approaches (rather than identity-based approaches) in which sexuality is seen as fluid and existing on a continuum (Sedgwick, 1990). They argue that such approaches are more appropriate because of the opportunity for opening productive discussions by examining the normalization of heterosexuality. Broader queer approaches have the potential to open up conversations and include a wider range of individuals. However, the adoption of more complex queer approaches has implications for how sexuality is addressed in workplace settings. Instead of seeking to create an understanding of and recognition of LGBT persons, queer approaches by

employee activists would seek to complicate sexuality and gender by dealing with the multifaceted approaches to “performing” gender and sexuality. I also consider the warnings of those who contend that radical deconstruction in queer theory leads to a loss of grounding that can result in immobilization due to the rejection of sexual identity as a meaningful category (e.g., Green, 2002). I explore the practical ramifications of taking such an approach and the problems surrounding the normalization of queerness by corporations.

Other work has explored the purposes, goals, and outcomes of ERGs through conceptual and empirical research (Bierema, 2005; D’Emilio & Freedman, 1997; Githens, 2008; Githens & Aragon, 2009; Raeburn, 2004a). In many ways, this article serves a different purpose by providing a conceptual exploration of influences and confounding issues that interact with LGBT ERGs. Throughout the article, I integrate the literature from LGBT ERGs, employee activism, LGBT studies, and queer studies to argue that these groups are products of complex interactions in which workplace activism occurs through capitalist structures, identity politics, and queer approaches to sexuality. My continuous reflection on the role of capitalism helps to ground the argument in the multifaceted demands faced by employee activists. The conceptual exploration of these issues, influenced by social science and cultural studies approaches, contributes to our understanding of how employee groups lead to development of individuals, organizations, and societies.

### **Capitalism and the Rise of LGBT Employee Activism**

D’Emilio (1993) argues that the rise in gay and lesbian identity in the U.S. is a direct result of the structures created by capitalism. He explains that homosexual acts and tendencies have occurred throughout history; however, the idea of being gay or homosexual is a relatively new phenomenon (also see Foucault, 1978). D’Emilio concludes that the emergence of such identities was a slow process that started in the colonial era when capitalism began replacing the widespread system of individual household production. Over decades, the number of self-sufficient households declined. These households had relied on the nuclear family (i.e., husband, wife, children) for production, but became part of a system of wage labor that deemphasized self-sufficiency. With household production, individuals needed to move into heterosexual relationships because of the central role that procreation played in living a sustainable life. Capitalism, on the other hand, allowed for selling one’s labor and purchasing goods that were produced outside of the family. This shift resulted in a steady, gradual decline in household production and a decline in the importance of procreative relationships in maintaining a decent life (as evidenced by declining birthrates). As a result, individuals with same-sex attractions were no longer compelled to enter opposite-sex relationships. Over the span of decades, people with same-sex attractions slowly started entering same-sex relationships and developing social networks that included others who also had same-sex attractions.

D’Emilio (1993) explains that this gradual change and the slow emergence of gay identities culminated in World War II, which resulted in the explosion of gay identity formation. The war took thousands of men and women from around the country and placed them into same-sex environments, in addition to placing those who already identified as gay into those environments. Same-sex sexual relations occurred throughout the war, and many gays and lesbians remained in large cities after the war ended, which resulted in the formation of urban

communities based on sexuality. Later, the Stonewall riots occurred (in 1969), which is seen as the formal beginning of the gay and lesbian liberation movement. D'Emilio explains that the structures of capitalism (e.g., movement to cities that resulted from the decline in self-sufficient households) allowed the gay and lesbian movement to form a grassroots network that was activated after the events in 1969. In the last 30 years, this network was responsible for the pressuring of corporate leaders that resulted in astounding success in changing workplace policies.

Most post-World War II capitalists did not embrace gays and lesbians. In fact, there is a well-documented history of oppression by employers, especially during and after the McCarthy era (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997). After Stonewall, activists began targeting prominent companies like AT&T, who were openly discriminatory in their hiring practices toward gays and lesbians (Raeburn, 2004a). The first LGBT ERG formed in 1978 (Raeburn, 2004a); however, it took years of work on the part of activists before most companies started adopting nondiscriminatory policies. Interestingly, corporations have been more progressive in their practices toward LGBT individuals than governmental agencies (for a discussion of federal government employment practices during the Clinton administration, see Hirsch, 2000). Many companies adopted LGBT-friendly policies before state and local nondiscrimination laws were changed to include sexual orientation.<sup>3</sup> Most companies do not adopt these policies for purely altruistic reasons. One reason for adopting inclusive policies is to capture a larger share of what is perceived as a lucrative LGBT consumer market.<sup>4</sup> By adopting these LGBT-friendly policies, companies often alienate other customers, particularly religious fundamentalists (for an excellent discussion of the complicated history of LGBT relations at Disney, see Truesdell, 2001). Many companies are willing to confront this risk. However, I argue that one of the most important reasons companies have adopted these policies is due to pressure by employee activists and to keep LGBT employees happy.

It is important to examine the conditions that created an environment where employers sought to ensure the satisfaction of LGBT workers, while risking the loss of customers. As capitalism created the structures for the creation of gay and lesbian identities, newer forms of capitalism have also created conditions in which a substantial portion of an individual's identity is wrapped up in work (Ciulla, 2000). In the 1950s, workplaces sought to improve productivity through enhancing human relations at work and implementing paternalistic employment practices (e.g., comprehensive pension programs, career-long employment). In the current era, these paternalistic practices have been replaced by new approaches that are designed to increase worker productivity through helping employees create meaning through their jobs (Ciulla, 2000). Today, individual identity is intertwined with work, especially for many white-collar workers. As a result of this shift, work is no longer a place individuals go to sell their labor; instead, individuals go to work to seek meaning in their lives. With this identification of the workplace as a center of personal identity, it has become essential that employers keep their workers happy in

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<sup>3</sup> At this time of this paper's writing, U.S. federal laws do not prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

<sup>4</sup> As LGBT people have been viewed as lucrative consumer markets, some have feared admitting the reality that LGBT people are poorer, on average. According to Robson (1997), the false notion of the "affluent gay" has allowed anti-LGBT activists to refute notions of LGBT discrimination by claiming that they are rich and undeserving of protections. Robson draws parallels between the rhetoric about rich gay people and the pre-World War II anti-Jewish portrayals.

order for workers to have meaningful careers (which leads to maximizing productivity). For a few decades, workers and employers assumed that most people would spend an entire career with one organization. Currently, most jobs are not secure and workers expect to have free choice in employment—moving from job-to-job in order to find the most meaningful and well-paying position. Workers are no longer consumers only after work hours when shopping for goods and services. They are now consumers at work. Especially during strong economic times, workers expect to find an ideal job and they are not afraid to leave an employer to seek a better deal elsewhere. With the replacement of defined-benefit pension plans by 401(k) plans, workers have little incentive to remain with an employer if they are not satisfied. Those who advocate free choice and autonomy celebrate this consumer mentality in employment. Later, I will return to a discussion of the dangers of this consumer mentality. On the upside, this consumerism in employment has allowed LGBT employee activists to encourage change in workplaces. In contrast, politicians and government administrators have not been as eager to adopt these suggested changes (neither in government employment practices nor in employment laws).

Over the last 35 years, LGBT activists have had major wins. However, the pace of change has been somewhat slow, especially in changing public policy. For example, only 13 states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) prohibit discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and gender identity and seven more prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2008). Eight additional states prohibit this type of discrimination in public sector employment only (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2008). Although governments have been slow to recognize that LGBT individuals should be able to work without discrimination, policies in large corporations have changed much more quickly. Ninety-six percent of companies listed in the Fortune 100 prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation (while only 57% of states and D.C. prohibit discrimination in state government employment; Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2008). A more tangible measure of private sector support is seen through offering benefits to same-sex partners of employees, which 79% of Fortune 100 companies provide, compared to 27% of states and D.C. It is important to understand how the policies have changed so quickly in corporate America.

As explained above, capitalism has created structures that allowed homosexuals to create gay and lesbian identities and move toward equality with heterosexuals. However, corporate policies were not changed merely by the market's invisible hand. Contrary to corporate executives' perceptions that LGBT-friendly policies were the result of market forces, Raeburn's (2004b) evidence suggests strongly that employee activism played a major role in these changes. For example, over two-thirds (67%) of Fortune 1000 companies that adopted domestic partner benefits in the 1990s did so after facing pressure from ERGs or other forms of mobilized LGBT groups. Employee activists working through ERGs and other means have brought this employee relations issue to the attention of management within corporations throughout the country. Due to the current iteration of U.S. capitalism, in which employees seek meaning through work, employee activists have been remarkably successful in their pursuit of changing corporate policies. This collective effort was made possible largely through the use of identity politics.

## Identity Politics and Queerness

Identity politics is “a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups” (Heyes, 2002, para. 1). The classic debate over identity politics is familiar to many social and ethnic movements and is especially well known within LGBT circles. The debate centers around whether members of a socially constructed group choose to adopt a fixed identity in order to gain political power or whether they reject the fixed identity because of the limiting nature of defined identities (Gamson, 1995). For LGBT people, much of the social change that has occurred can be credited to the adoption of an ethnic-type gay and lesbian identity by those who have sex with members of the same gender (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997). Queer theory and queer politics have provided an alternative to the essentialist ideas sometimes adopted in LGBT politics. By adopting a deconstructionist approach, queer theory rejects fixed categories (e.g., “lesbians”) and the idea that leaders of a movement can speak for its members. At its core, queer theory rejects notions of sexual identity and instead emphasizes the fluidity of human sexuality. Queer approaches are more open and inclusive, which can lead to opening discourse with others rather than shutting people off into ghettoized categories (Alexander, 1999; Gamson, 1995; Sedgwick, 1990). In some ways, queer approaches seem to be a new version of the early tactics of gay and lesbian activists, who were very assertive in building coalitions with other civil rights movements. However, while queer approaches seek to be inclusive, they also seek a radical disruption of norms that has sometimes resulted in a very specific group being at the center (e.g., White middle class men). This radical approach has resulted in producing another binary (i.e., straight versus queer) and has oftentimes resulted in the same ethnic-type identity that “queerness” was supposed to eliminate (Cohen, 2005; Gamson, 1995; Smith, 1996).

Gamson (1995) explains that there is a “queer dilemma” that recognizes the validity and problems in the arguments of both the identity defenders and the queer supporters. On the one hand, LGBT boundaries are false and distorted. Although there is debate on whether sexual preference is innate, learned, chosen, or some combination, there are no firm distinctions between gay/lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and straight. Therefore, LGBT politics are sometimes problematic due to the presentation of LGBT issues as unified and shared among all people who identify as L, G, B, or T. Unification can result in a push toward conformity among group members (Alexander, 1999). For example, some LGBT individuals do not believe in marriage for anyone, while others seek to marry their same-sex partners. Another problem is seen through the specificity of LGBT issues. Some would argue that small groups of LGBT individuals can only bring about a certain amount of change without support and involvement from broader constituencies (see Cohen, 2005; Lee, Murphy, North, & Ucelli, 2000). For example, the focus on domestic partner benefits is more appealing to other groups when it includes all couples and not just same-sex couples. The emphasis on marriage rights for same-sex couples is often used as an example of a cause that is of limited interest to those who do not currently identify as LGBT (e.g., “Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: A New Strategic Vision for All Our Families and Relationships,” 2006).

On the other hand, a collective identity is necessary in our current context because “interest-group politics...is...how the American sociopolitical environment is structured” (Gamson, 1995, p. 400). Labels such as “gay,” “Black,” and “Latino” are not merely

constructions of language; they are social constructions that have tangible social consequences for people (Green, 2002). Among African Americans, there has been debate about expanding the small number of formal race categories and including broader multicultural categories. Although there is recognition that our narrow conceptions of race are not accurate, narrow categorization is seen as the only way to fight discrimination, based on the current system structure. As Gamson (1995) points out, many members of the Right, along with queer theorists and activists, reject the idea of a fixed homosexual identity. The Right uses this argument to argue against legal protections based on sexual orientation, since sexuality cannot be easily categorized. They argue that since sexuality is fluid, it is difficult to discriminate based on a constantly changing sexual preference because we could all end up having sex with someone of the same gender.

There are obvious flaws and dangers in both identity-oriented approaches and queer approaches. However, there is a possibility for utilizing and recognizing both approaches (Gamson, 1995). Alexander (1999) contends that we cannot eliminate identity; however, he calls for an emphasis on shared values that we have in common among ourselves and with others. Through emphasizing these shared values, we open ourselves up to partnerships with broader groups and larger constituencies. He provides the Religious Right as an example of emphasizing shared values. Within the Religious Right, there are great differences on specific theological issues. Few religious sects agree on theology. However, members of the Religious Right have strategically underemphasized (but not ignored) their theological differences and have rallied around these shared values, which has resulted in an extraordinarily powerful movement. For LGBT ERGs, opportunities exist for emphasizing shared values with other groups. There are opportunities for joining forces with other groups on issues like domestic partner benefits for unmarried couples (not just for same-gender couples). Another possible area for joint advocacy is working to enhance benefits for working parents. Although members of LGBT ERGs must be cautious since they are often viewed as competing with or threatening to other groups (Creed & Scully, 2000; Hirsch, 2000), this emphasis on shared values could create new opportunities for collaborative efforts to seek organizational changes.

Employee activists do more than advocate for large-scale policy changes like domestic partner benefits. Small-scale, local changes are often rejected as being insignificant; however, the day-to-day work of employee activism is largely centered around such changes (Scully & Segal, 2002). In organizations, the most important decisions usually happen at the local level, which is where ERGs have great potential to make an impact. When asking members of ERGs what they have accomplished or what they actually do, Scully and Segal found that for many ERGs, merely *existing* was an accomplishment in itself. The support and visibility provided through the groups' existence was a significant social change. For LGBT groups, this queering of corporate spaces is a crucial activity. As more companies adopt equitable benefits packages and enact LGBT-friendly policies, groups will likely emphasize smaller-scale awareness and education efforts rather than sweeping changes. These smaller-scale efforts have the potential of using queer approaches that would upset the neat boundaries of sexuality. For example, in addressing the repeated controversies over the use of gendered restrooms for transgender people, a conventional employee group could join with an employee group that advocates for individuals with disabilities to request a private, non-gendered restroom during a building renovation project. This restroom could make life easier for a future transgender employee (if that individual was

not comfortable using a larger restroom) and could also be beneficial for some people with disabilities who may prefer more privacy and space.

To a certain degree, LGBT ERGs already balance queer approaches and identity-based approaches to political and social action. ERGs rely on identity-based approaches as an organizing tool. However, activism within corporations is necessarily more conservative than activism occurring through community-based groups. In fact, Raeburn (2004b) contends that some of the success of ERGs was a result of the contrasting images of professional-appearing employees seeking change from inside the company, when compared to queer activists outside the corporation. According to Raeburn's evidence, corporate executives were happy to deal with a calm and collected employee, when they considered the alternative. In these cases, the LGBT movement benefited from both the insiders and the outsiders (the "professionals" and the "queers"), whose work was complementary in many respects. However, many queer activists reject the work of ERGs as being assimilationist because large corporations are a quintessential representation of power and privilege in our modern society. The existence of LGBT groups within corporations is a major departure from the gay and lesbian movement of the 1960s, when overthrow of social institutions was a major goal (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997). Some LGBT activists are displeased about this mainstreaming of the movement. However, representations of queerness within large, conservative organizations are somewhat jarring to the status quo. Thirty years ago, most LGBT people would not have considered being open about their sexuality at work. Today, many are open and some even organize meetings and events with others who are LGBT. This public display of sexuality has the effect of both queering the corporation and normalizing queerness. In the following section, I explore the problems and possibilities surrounding the normalization of queerness within corporations and the queering of corporations that result from LGBT ERGs.

### **Normalization of Queerness**

The idea of normalizing queerness is undoubtedly troubling to some LGBT and queer activists. If queerness becomes normalized or mainstream, it essentially loses its meaning since the word "queer" describes the rejection of normativity. In order to consider the normalization of queerness through LGBT ERGs, it is helpful to reflect upon advertising and the LGBT consumer market. Due to a desire for profits, advertisers and corporations have reached out to the LGBT audience. The use of queerness to market consumer products has been quite controversial for queers. However, lessons can be learned from the response to queer consumerism when considering LGBT ERGs because there are some parallels between the two developments. As I explained earlier, D'Emilio (1993) contends that capitalism has allowed for the emergence of a modern LGBT identity. In recent years, capitalist employment practices have allowed LGBT workers to assert themselves and seek changes in largely non-unionized workplaces.

The appropriation of queerness by business interests is welcome by some, due to the power of business to legitimize. However, others bemoan this legitimization by corporate interests due to their suspicion of capitalism and the fear of queerness being overtaken by corporate interests (Berlant & Freeman, 1993). Specifically, queerness loses its radical edge when appropriated by corporations. For example, Alexander (1999) and Hill (1996) explain that the use of gays and lesbians in ads contributes to the assimilationist goal of showing that gays

and lesbians are like everyone else. This is seen as undesirable by some because such ads usually contain a sanitized version of queerness that rarely includes those in the fringe. However, queerness is also seen through advertising. Numerous examples of the ambiguous use of gay and lesbian themes exist in mainstream advertising outlets. The use of androgynous models and subtly queer references in advertisements has resulted in a queering of mainstream spaces. Subtle examples abound in advertising, in which subtly gay, lesbian, or homoerotic images are the focus of the ad (e.g., Abercrombie and Fitch and J. Crew ads). Clark (1993) explains that LGBT and queer activists must be careful to not reject such ads immediately due to anti-corporate predispositions, which can result in giving too much power to corporations and seeing oneself as powerless. Instead, she advocates D'Emilio's perspective of working through the interplay of autonomy and exploitation. The appropriation of queerness by corporations benefits those companies, but has the potential to benefit queers as well. With LGBT ERGs, members participate in corporate-sponsored floats in pride parades and are featured in company advertisements within LGBT publications. Additionally, employers promote ERGs both inside and outside their companies as evidence of their "commitment to diversity." Employers also use members of ERGs as expert panels to provide marketing, recruitment, and other advice for the employer (Agnvall, 2008; Jirak, 2001). It is important to recognize the problems with queerness being normalized and toned down in order for companies to promote their diversity. However, it is valuable to recognize that queers can also use companies for their benefit. It is not necessarily a case of exploitation by one group or the other, but rather a dynamic tension in which both queers and corporations are seeking benefits. Many of the benefits are complementary rather than opposing.

### **Dangers and Promises of ERGs**

Foucault's (1978) notion of "bio-power" explains the self-regulation of individuals through social norms and values. In the past, government enforcement occurred through the constant threat of violence by governmental authorities. Today, the threat of government-sponsored violence is rarely necessary to "administer the bodies" of the masses. In the last few centuries, we have seen substantial growth of government institutions involved in the administration of bodies through agencies such as secondary schools, universities, and public health agencies. These institutions exercise bio-power, through inculcation of values that result in self-regulation, which has resulted in the comparatively rare use of physical violence by governments. Marshall (1995) expands on this concept by using the term "busno-power" to critically explore the commonly-held capitalist notion that people want free choice and autonomy in their lives. He contends that continuous free choices and individualized consumer decisions permeate all aspects of our lives. For example, as explained earlier, workers are now encouraged to seek out the employer that best meets their needs. Marshall problematizes such ideas by explaining that consumers must make endless free choices in all aspects of their lives and become mini economic enterprises themselves. In managing their own mini-enterprises, individuals must respond continuously to market demands and develop the skills necessary to survive, which results in a totalizing influence in individuals' lives. The ideas of busno-power can be extended further to explain the need of workers to seek individual meaning in their lives. Through a consumer mentality, workers seek meaningful work opportunities continuously in order to find the job that best suits their needs. Individuals, or mini economic enterprises, are not only responsible for ensuring their own economic fate, but also need to find personal fulfillment

through work. Workers are responsible for selling their labor, in addition to confronting the newer expectation that they give up (or share) a part of their soul in order to meaningfully contribute to the corporation (Ciulla, 2000; Elliott & Turnbull, 2003).

This overemphasis on individual needs through work can be dangerous due to its totalizing qualities. First, there is the constant threat of exploitation. If one's meaning is wrapped up in work, why not dedicate all of one's waking hours to work? When meaning and happiness are found through work, there is little need for limiting oneself to a 40-hour workweek. Second, it is possible that a corporation could become progressive on LGBT issues, but be less progressive or even oppressive on other issues (e.g., the use of sweatshops; Truesdell, 2001). There is a danger that this limited focus on LGBT issues could result in a blindness to others' conditions (Duggan, 2003). Third, workers are laid off. With employers now providing leisure and spiritual activities within the confines of the corporate campus, many workers have no significant life outside of work. When workers lose their jobs, great depression and angst can result. Fourth, communities can suffer. When work serves as a main source of meaning, people have little need to meet neighbors, participate in civic and religious organizations, or volunteer in the community.

ERGs and the activities of employee activists have the potential of being yet another example of total influence of the employer on the life of the worker. If substantial changes are made in workplaces, LGBT employees may become happier in their jobs, which could result in even more time spent at work. One could also argue that those who have activist instincts are no longer seeking change in *society*, but merely want to change the *corporation*. However, a less pessimistic viewpoint sees the promise that ERGs have for overcoming these dilemmas and contributing to the great public good. Mayo (2005) explains that busno-power is resisted through small everyday acts and Gibson-Graham (1996) explains that common activities often result in re-imagining capitalism. We often fail to see these new formations of capitalism because of a negative focus and blindness to new social formations. Participation in ERGs can be a location of resistance to the dominant focus on individual and employer needs, which permeates workplaces. ERGs do not merely seek to meet individual or employer needs; instead, they can result in the re-imagining of workplaces that moves beyond the dominant focus on individualistic goals and corporate profits. In fact, participation in activist-oriented ERGs is not likely to be the quickest means to advance one's career. Instead, ERGs include a societal and political dimension, which counters the depoliticized discourse commonly found in corporations (Elliott & Turnbull, 2003). By focusing on a cause larger than one's immediate personal goals, workers can become more grounded in a larger sense of purpose beyond their own "mini economies." These activist activities could result in relationships and activism outside of the workplace realm. Therefore, ERGs can serve a larger purpose in helping people to resist the individualistic and careerist aims often seen in organizations. ERG members challenge corporate norms, which helps to counter the dominant unitary ideas expressed frequently by corporate leaders (e.g., "What's good for the company is good for the employee"; see Ciulla, 2000; McGuire, Cross, & O'Donnell, 2005). These processes create an opportunity for individuals to understand themselves, their friends, their corporations, and society in a different way.

## Conclusions

Through ERGs, individuals can develop themselves by becoming more socially aware and working for a cause larger than oneself. ERGs provide organization development by helping companies become more humane and equitable places of employment. As a result, organizational performance can be enhanced as a result of improving workplace climate, employee relations, and public relations. Due to having such goals, ERGs are now supported and encouraged by HR departments within companies (Bierema, 2005; Githens & Aragon, 2007). ERGs can also result in societal development by making societies more inclusive, less individualistic, and more community-oriented.

As I mentioned in the introduction, LGBT employee activists continuously balance their drive for social change and their need to contribute to organizational productivity. However, their role is not as simple as dealing with those two binaries. Additionally, employee activists deal with how much to utilize identity politics and queer approaches or how to imagine new strategies of social change. They also deal with how much to allow for an appropriation of gayness and queerness by the corporation. Lastly, these employees continuously juggle their individual needs as a worker-consumer, a worker-meaning seeker, a worker-activist, and the manager of a mini economy.

As stated earlier, a productive tension exists in which LGBT employees and corporations both seek benefits from ERGs. Some LGBT employees are self-interested and are only concerned with their own narrow interests. Others want to contribute to the corporation and to improve conditions for both themselves and others. Likewise, some corporations are merely concerned with direct links to improved performance while other corporations seek to improve performance while striving to create more equitable and humane workplaces. All of these competing interests and goals result in a dynamic interplay that both utilize capitalist structures and help to counteract the negative demands of capitalism through development and change at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. Future empirical research can extend the conceptual questions raised here by further examining how these competing demands and interests are managed within corporate settings. Given current economic conditions, particular emphasis might be placed upon understanding and evaluating the presence of these tensions when companies and workers are less secure.

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**EFFORTS OF BIFURCATION<sup>1</sup> AND LIBERATION:  
DECONSTRUCTING THE STORY OF A TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY LESBIAN,  
PART ONE**

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**Abstract**

This manuscript takes as its centerpiece fragments of the author's personal story of growing up as a closeted lesbian in school, in the Fortune 500, in the community, and a number of years attempting to integrate her lesbian identity into her professional persona – outside of the closet. This manuscript makes an attempt at a “duality search” (Boje, 2001, p. 23), deconstructing the story as it examines the bifurcation between personal and public, and in this case more exactly, professional and sexual orientation identities. The tension between closeted outsider and the prevailing expectations for promising “insiders” in organizational settings is also viewed in this paper through two related frames, both of which draw from lesbian feminist theory. The first is the concept of the Borderlands, as articulated by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987). The second is Adrienne Rich's (1979, 1994) work and perspective on lying.

This two-part paper takes as its centerpiece fragments of the author's personal story of 22 years as a closeted lesbian in the Fortune 500 and 4 years attempting to integrate her lesbian identity into her professional/public persona. This paper undertakes a “duality search” (Boje, 2001, p. 23) in its deconstruction of the story as it examines the bifurcated dance of choices between personal and public, or in this case more exactly, professional and sexual orientation identities (McNaught, 1993).

I have been telling fragments of my story for 25 years, primarily to sympathetic listeners, often to women and often to homosexuals. Lately I feel prompted to move beyond the telling, beyond the complaint, to reflection and analysis. Using Boje's (2001) “guidelines for deconstruction” (p. 21), I have attempted to undertake that task here. In addition to Boje's guidelines, the work of two lesbians prompt and influence this process. The first is the concept of the Borderlands, as articulated by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987). The second is Adrienne Rich's work and specifically her perspective on lying (1979) and compulsory heterosexuality (1994).

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<sup>1</sup> The term bifurcation used in the title of this paper is intended to embrace two meanings. The first and primary interpretation the author intends is the act of splitting into two branches, linked at a node, but existing independently of one another. The second interpretation draws on Poincaré's use of the term to “describe the emergence of multiple potential stable solutions” (retrieved from: [www.soulwork.net/sw\\_articles\\_eng/chaos.htm](http://www.soulwork.net/sw_articles_eng/chaos.htm)) in the context of chaos theory.

Rather than a traditional review of the selected literature separate from the work itself, here ideas from the literature are linked more organically with the insights that emerge from the process of the narrative deconstruction and accompanying implications for organizations. I begin with a discussion of method and then move to discussion of each of the eight steps as they unfolded in the process. Part One of the paper takes us through the first three steps – those that are focused on an examination of what is in the text. Part Two of the paper will explicate the unfolding of the remaining five steps – those that explore what is not in the text, what is missing, silenced, or implicit between and behind the lines of the text. I close each part of the paper with a few notes on the process and a reflection on the outcomes I experienced from undertaking it on my own story.

### **Method**

This work accepts as its starting point the assumption often taken up by narrative theorists (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2006; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Riessman, 1993; White & Epston, 1990) and social constructionists (Gergen, 1999) that we lead storied lives and that the way we story ourselves is not a reflection of, but a shaping of our lived experiences. In the work that follows, I apply Boje's (2001) guidelines for deconstruction to fragments of my own story. These fragments are themselves small stories. I have told them many times in a huge variety of contexts in an effort make and express meaning about my experiences as a lesbian. In the deconstruction that follows, they are sometimes considered alone, in various combinations, and sometimes as the entire landscape they create as a unified piece.

I have chosen Boje's (2001) process for deconstruction in large measure due to the appeal of the discreet steps and especially of his eighth step, restorying, which in many ways distinguishes his process from others in its optimism about the collaborative relationship we can have with living stories (Tyler, 2007). The first three of Boje's eight steps in support of deconstructing stories, which are included in Part One, are (a) making a duality search, (b) reinterpreting the hierarchy looking at how one term in the duality dominates the other, and (c) finding the rebel voice(s) by denying the authority of the one voice. The remaining steps, which will be covered in Part Two, are (d) telling the other side of the story by reversing it, (e) denying the plot by turning it around, (f) finding the exception, (g) tracing between the lines, and (h) resituating the story, restory it (Boje, 2001). In the work that follows, each of these steps is introduced prior to a discussion of its implementation.

When Boje (2001) talks about deconstruction, his focus is primarily, though not solely, on deconstructing dominant stories, stories that marginalize, stories that oppress, suppress, repress, reduce in one way or many, the voice, experience and meaning of "the other." So I wondered: what happens when "the other" deconstructs the version of her own story of otherness that she tells. Will it, in the spirit of dualism, turn inside out to offer the old view of the oppressor's story? Or will it become a new version of the oppressor's story? Or will it break free from the shackles of dualism to become/reveal some other story, something else altogether?

My first thought had been to ask a colleague whose lens is feminist post-structuralism to deconstruct the story with me/for me, in a process that I imagined us negotiating. But as I reread my fragments in preparation for my request, I realized that I was not yet willing to turn "my

story” (which of course is not only my story, but belongs also to all the voices in it, heard and unheard – including those I see as oppressors, including those I oppress) over to the hands of another person. I was not yet willing to let it go so entirely, and I decided that I would, instead, attempt the deconstruction of my own story. I have come a long way from this story, I reasoned. I can look back on it, I assured myself, with some degree of perspective, even objectivity. I became excited at the prospect of this form of auto-deconstruction. What, I wondered, would I learn from deconstructing my own story, in my voice, feeling more unfettered, more liberated from the closet, than I have ever felt before? What, if anything, might the process reveal that could matter to others?

I had typed the story fragments out in chronological order beginning in my childhood and ending with recent fragments drawn from the past 2 years. I sat down with these fragments and Boje’s (2001) guidelines and began to dig into the tasks as he articulates them. When I felt resistance, often in my body, to exploring the underbelly of the story, to challenging the way I have always told it, I found that I became a weakened (and weekend) digger. I slowed the process down. I put it aside, thinking of other articles I could write that were less “risky.” I resisted digging past and through my sense of foreboding about what the result would be.

Moreover, I found myself trapped in the timeline, looking at/for causality, and even catching myself in the act of inventing it. I was trying to make the story make sense in a way that, in my actual experience, it does not make sense. I was trying to make it rational and coherent when in fact it is not. Until attempting this process, I have never tried to make the story coherent for my listener(s), because the story feels incoherent to me. I experience it as dis-integrative, and certainly unfinished. There is nothing neat, round, or tidy about it. I cannot ensure that the first fragment in the chronology is my first relevant experience, only that for now it is the first one I remember. Because there are fragments missing in my account here (even fragments I do not know though they too are part of my story), the search for causality is senseless. Prior to this process, I had never really tried to explain, explicate, or in any way deeply examine any fragment of the story – not for my benefit or for the benefit of others. I have simply told them as stories, small stories that some may characterize as anecdotes or vignettes. These story fragments are elicited frequently in the context of other conversations. Sometimes people who have heard them before invite me to tell them again in a setting with new listeners. I do not express these fragments in a set order in these oral situations. Still I felt compelled to organize them into a chronology prior to their deconstruction.

So I had two problems. The first was my resistance to probe beneath the story I had already constructed about my story. The second was that I was stuck in the timeline that corresponded with my growing up. After reflecting on these problems at some length, I made two changes to the process that altered its shape significantly.

### *Challenging My Resistance*

I know that storytelling itself is both a personal and a social process (Tyler, 2004, 2007), and when I reminded myself that this was the case, it finally occurred to me that this deconstruction should also be done socially, and not only in my own head. Further, I see the deconstruction process as analytical but also as reflective and personal, and some of it, I believe,

can *only* be done quietly, as a solo process. As a result of this thinking, I conducted this process in a messy split of recorded conversations with a friend and colleague (who is a storyteller rather than a theorist), and quiet, personal reflection and writing. Together, my colleague and I used Boje's (2001) guidelines as the catalyst for recorded conversations about the story fragments. She would ask me probing questions that would result in me turning them over, sideways, and ultimately inside out to learn more about what was there. To proceed with the deconstruction process, each time we "concluded" a step, I would sit in reflection, then listen to the recording. Finally, I documented the outcomes from the step in a journal, which eventually morphed into the text in this article.

I used the deconstruction steps as the organizing schema for this article, so you will read about the steps as they unfolded for me. You will read about the discoveries I made, ranging as I suppose they variously do from naïve to surprising, as they occurred for me. The messy split began to feel organized on a tactical level, which was a relief, but the real insight was the stuff of energetic emotion and cognition. The process felt long and involved. It resulted in a paper that was challenging to write, and I hope it is sufficiently clear to engage you as a reader. It resulted in an experience that included pleasure and pain shared with my colleague, as well as the private exultation of intimate insight and the lonely licking of wounds.

### **Breaking Out of Chronologies' Trap**

To address the problem of the linearity of the story fragments, I printed them out in the chronological order I had typed at the outset of the process. Then, I cut them up with scissors. I cut them up with Gertrude Stein's (1935) notion of the role of sentence and paragraphing in narrative firmly fixed in my head and heart:

Narrative has been the telling of anything because there has been always has been a feeling that something followed another thing that there was succession in happening.

In a kind of way what has made the Old Testament such permanently good reading is that really in a way in the Old Testament writing there really was not any such thing there was not really any succession of anything and really in the Old Testament there is really no sentence existing and no paragraphing, think about this thing, think if you have not really been knowing this thing and then let us go on telling about what paragraphs and sentences have been what prose and poetry has been. (pp. 18-19)

This dismissal of the tyranny of retrospective paragraphing, and Stein's (1935) idea that "completion is completion, a thing done is a thing done and so it has in it no quality of ending or beginning" (p. 42), were fundamental to my decision to return the fragments to their natural, organic (oral) state. Freed from the Aristotelian notions of causality and beginnings, middles and ends (Boje, 2001), I was able to roam through the fragments in each of Boje's steps in a more liberated way. I could shuffle the fragments, reading and re-reading to see what emerged from different juxtapositions in the spirit of what Levy (2006) contends is "an entire way of viewing the world, representing the power that comes from aggregating content from a variety of sources

and playing it back in an order that renders irrelevant the intended ordering” (p. 229). Having the fragments disconnected from one another allowed not only for the “unintended ordering” of randomness, but for alternative intended orderings, by themes, by context or setting, by the type of characters in the key supporting roles, and so forth. And if I wanted, I could even reinstate the former (but not original) chronology. I could play with my story fragments now in ways that on some level rekindled their native, emergent nature. This ability to play made me braver. Brave enough, even, to write this article.

### **The Story Fragments**

To begin, here are some fragments of my story, out of “order” in the way that they sometimes crop up in conversations without context or synchronization. I have been telling them this way, off and on (in and out) for most of my life.

*When a lover moved in, we told everyone that it was a financial arrangement: I need the money for the mortgage, she needs a place to live. On Mondays when people asked me about my weekend, I told them about the movie Txxx and I saw or the music we heard. But I take to pronoun switching, and Txxx becomes conveniently, conversationally, and temporarily a man. No one asks to meet him, or suggests I bring him to the next company outing. He never comes along, and neither does Txxx. The unintended pun of the “outing” is unappreciated by all but me.*

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*In my new company, my boss Dxxx tells me about the parties with his wife’s friends – artists, designers, all sorts of ethnicities, races and sexual persuasions. He says how much better they are than the parties we have at the firm. I saw what he was doing: He was letting me know that he “knew,” and that it was alright. He never asked. With the best of intentions, he enabled the secret.*

*In this company, I make a firm resolve: no relationships at work. I am a vice president now, in a Fortune 500 firm. No more secret relationships at the office. I was in charge of succession planning for the entire company. This, I declared to the whole world, was why I would not socialize with the people at work. There was no way of knowing, I said, if people were only nice to curry favor. I could stay objective if no one came to my house for dinner. My social life had to brew outside of the company. It had to be separate, because of the succession plan.*

*But there was one guy, Mxxx, who became my “friend at work.” Dxxx hired Mxxx right after he hired me. When I met Mxxx, my “gaydar” tingled. But he was married with three kids, and he was clearly happy with his life, so my gaydar settled back down. He told me once that men hit on him a lot, and that he found it flattering. And after Dxxx died and I quit, Mxxx told me a story about a conversation he had with Dxxx when he was newly hired. Dxxx had told Mxxx that the company was buzzing because Dxxx, new himself, was hiring “too many homosexuals,” meaning Mxxx and me. Too many, in a company of 20,000. Mxxx’s wife and kids threw them off the scent where he was concerned, but I had no such cover. Mxxx was surprised to learn that Dxxx never had that same conversation with me.*

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*When I took a teaching job at a university, I thought, “This is the place where I can be fully me, where I can come to work whole”. This is a place that will care more about my intellect than my sexual orientation.” And they do, but the university is a system and there is tenure to consider. There is a limit to their generosity.*

*I wanted to participate in a program that was featuring minority faculty. I went to see the administrator about getting involved, and she reminded me that her focus was on minorities. I reminded her that I am lesbian. “Oh,” said, “that. You’re the wrong kind of minority. I mean the real minorities. These,” she said, holding up a list, “the ones on the federal list.”*

*When I submit a draft of my personal narrative for a tenure review, I am counseled to remove the phrase “as a lesbian,” on the basis that it may distract reviewer’s attention from my academic accomplishments.*

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*When I left corporate work, I started a small business with my partner, Lxxx. This, I thought, this will set me free. But Lxxx was Amish and we were writing books about the Amish, and Lxxx said, “You know, Jo, we can’t be out, not with the Amish, or they won’t work with me.” So the secret stayed with us.*

*When Lxxx was diagnosed with cancer, we were scared. This was big. People die from this. We were facing this huge illness and we had no money coming in. So here’s one thing I thought: “At least I don’t have to “come out” in the Fortune 500. At least I’m already gone.” At the hospital, we were outed by her illness, and when she died, none of it seemed to matter.*

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*I was working in a big city overseas when I met Vxxx. She was a manager too, in the same firm. She had never been in a relationship with a woman. She wanted to keep it secret. She felt paranoid. When we would go out together after work we would leave separately and take separate trains, meeting up again far from the office. If we would take a cab between our houses, she would ask me to lie down in the seat as we went by the office, or she would lie down herself, so no one would see us together. “You know,” I said, “our friendship is plausible.” Our secret hurt.*

*When Vxxx was diagnosed with mental illness, the head of HR got involved. He was my boss. He called me into his office. “Your friends with Vxxx, aren’t you? I need you to be my mole. Be a dear, and find a few things out for me. Let me know what’s going on.” I leave his office rattled. Who pays me? Who do I love? I never do tell the HR head anything, but Vxxx breaks up with me when her therapist tells her that it is her relationship with me that is causing her illness.*

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*My company funded my doctorate degree in New York City. I started the program thinking, “This is a liberal institution three hours and a world away from corporate. Here I can finally see what it feels like to be fully ‘out.’” I thought I could separate this world of school from the world of work. The first friends I made there discouraged me from coming out in class and in my coursework. “It could have a negative impact,” they said. “It could cause you problems.” They meant well, and I heeded their advice. By the time my partner was diagnosed with cancer, I was an adjunct professor in New York. I called my department chair to say that I had to be with Lxxx,*

*and I couldn't teach. She didn't hesitate with her support, and though she'd never met Lxxx (since she had been a secret), she sent a card to her at the hospital.*

*Before she died, Lxxx said, "some people believe that keeping secrets makes you sick." She wondered if our bifurcated life had contributed to her illness. Lxxx and I made a promise then, that when she was well, we would live a whole and truthful life. We would leave the closet to the coats and the linens.*

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*In college, my roommates and I were talking about some of the cliques on campus. "Oh," she said, "there's a whole group of lesbians in the nursing program. They're horrible. You have to keep your eye on them you know." You know. You know what I mean.*

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*Back in the States with a new company, I was swept away by Axxx. She worked in my new company. I should have known better, but who ever does? She was younger and she still believed the secret was more exciting. So we kept it. She liked it that way. By now, for me, the secret came at a cost. Keeping it drained away energy that could have been channeled into my work, into poetry, into anything. Keeping the secret consumed my creativity.*

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*I was attending a Unitarian Universalist church. "Here, I thought, is the place where I can be fully me. Homosexuality is no big deal for these people." When the congregation decided to go through the community process to become a "welcoming congregation" the minister was threatened and major benefactors stopped contributing to capital campaigns.*

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*After my first lover, I kept every one of my affairs secret. That was the way I knew. When I finally left California to come back east, I left alone. I took a job as a training manager at an elevator company in New England. They sent all their new managers to sexual harassment training. After one day of training where we sat with the men, they split the genders apart. We learned how to know when we were being harassed by men. The last day was devoted to making sure that we didn't do anything that was suggestive to the men. I couldn't explain that, really, for me, this was not likely to be a problem. That it would be more productive for me leave the training early, to go back to work. It seemed too hard to explain. And scary. So I stayed in class and learned not to rub the men's shoulders or to pat them on the knee, not to show too much cleavage or stand too close. Keeping the secret was not exciting, but it seemed easier. It felt safer. I was one of the girls.*

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*In 1963, Kxxx Wxxx was my kindergarten teacher. She wanted us to call her Lady Kxxx and we did. I loved kindergarten at Lady Kxxx's. There were kids there, not like up in the sheep pasture where my father built our house. Lady Kxxx liked boys. One day I got to kindergarten and learned that it was "Boys' Day." Only the boys would get to play the new games and learn to make puppets out of paper. In a corner of the room Lady Kxxx's helper Mrs. Bxxx showed my best friend and me how to make the puppets. Just as we were making the final folds, Lady Kxxx yelled at her that it was Boys' Day, and that we were not boys. Mrs. Bxxx left the room then, and we didn't see her for the rest of the day.*

*When it was time for the Apollo space launch, Lady Kxxx opened the door to her living room, which we had never seen before. She said we could watch the launch on her TV, but when we*

*crowded into the room, she said, “No only the boys can come in the room. Only boys can be astronauts. The girls can watch from the doorway. We had to crane our necks to see, stretching long, and holding our arms around the shoulders of the other girls to squeeze them in for a look.*

*When my Mom picked me up, she asked me why I was so mad. I told her about Boys Day and Apollo and she said she’d talk to Lady Kxxx. Lady Kxxx assured my mother that there would be a Girls’ Day, soon but there never was. It was the first time that I had a sense that boys were different, better, and I didn’t believe it.*

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*The classes I teach at University are peppered with students who, for whatever reasons, are homophobic. I can live with students not taking my classes because they don’t want to read so much or write so often, but I’m sad when they miss out on the benefits of my classes because they don’t agree with what they call my “lifestyle.” And I can’t afford to have them channel their distaste for it through their evaluations of my teaching. As a new professor I struggle with issues of authenticity. Maybe after I get tenure I’ll be free. Maybe then.*

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*My first female lover was my roommate in California. It began as a financial arrangement, since neither of us could afford an apartment on our own. We were both newly employed at Hewlett-Packard. It was 1982. The heyday of Silicon Valley. San Francisco was the city of free love. But Palo Alto was an hour and a world away and she said to me, “Don’t tell anyone. We can keep it a secret. It’s more exciting that way. Really, it’s better.” I had no idea about these things, and I believed her. I believed it was better.*

*No one knew about us. Not our friends. Not my colleagues. We went to work in the same building every day. We would swap pronouns and she would occasionally go on dates with men. “We call it cover,” she said. “It wouldn’t be good if it got out about us at work. It’s really much safer this way.” Safer.*

*When she gave me a round- house kick and dislocated my collarbone there was no one to tell. I went into work from the emergency room. “Biking,” I told everyone. “Really it was a lucky fall.” And everyone believed me - why wouldn’t they? “Coulda been a lot worse,” I would add. This part was true. And everyone agreed.*

*When we sold our condo and she moved back to the Midwest, no one gave her departure a second thought. People came and went every day in Silicon Valley. It was the land of motion – shifting earth, shifting populations. No one suspected that for me our parting was less about her leaving, more about me staying behind. Being safer. Alone, I began to think that being secret, keeping a secret was, somehow, not better.*

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*When I was eight, I wanted Sxxx to be my boyfriend. I was a girl who liked girls. I was a girl with a boy’s name. Maybe I was supposed to be a boy? I didn’t want to be a boy. But if girls liked boys, then I wasn’t quite a girl, even though I wasn’t a boy. I was somewhere in between. But where in between?*

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*In my classes at grad school I learned about the oppression of organizational discourse, and I began to try to enter queer language in to the discourse of my own organization – the one paying*

*my tuition. There was a qualified lesbian on the shop floor who was passed over for promotion by her homophobic plant manager because she was too out. She decided that it would be useful to tell her story in our first-line manager training. It became discussable. Managers started using words like lesbian and gay instead of dyke and faggot.*

*Once I wove that story into a professional development workshop I was giving at an ivy-league university. At the break a student approached me. "Let's face it," she said. "As a dyke, you had a stake in it, right? Be honest. You wouldn't have bothered if she were overlooked because of race." I told her I would like to think that I would have bothered, but the student didn't want an answer. She just wanted to accuse me of being a dyke.*

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*Because it was shorter and easier, my friend Alison went by Al. Because it was my name, I went by Jo. We liked it that we both had boys' names and we had fun lowering our voices and greeting each other in the hall like the football players did. When we got to the regional high school there were 2000 kids. Kids from everywhere. Al caught up with me just before gym class during the first week. "Just so you know, I heard there's a girl here who likes other girls. Be careful." Be careful.*

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*I became a professional storyteller, and as I got more involved in the storytelling community, I began to think, "Here is the place that I will be free to be who I am, fully and unequivocally." But the storytelling community is mainly interested in stories about conventional family and old-fashioned fun. They don't want to hear lesbian stories, and they certainly don't want to hear about homosexuals who die.*

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There are perhaps more fragments here than we need, and here we by no means have the whole catalog from my half-century of living. You can see that I have not told you about my parents who I love deeply, or my willingness to turn down a job I really wanted when the climate seemed unwelcoming, or being harassed in Aruba, or about my nephews, or about things that were happening that I didn't realize were happening, which leaves me unable to tell you about them. You can see that there is a lot left out of here: a lot of story kept in me, and a lot of story kept out of me. These are the fragments that I frequently tell, as I frequently tell them, that I used in the process of deconstruction suggested by Boje (2001). There are 17 fragments in all, coincidentally a prime number, something in between no story and all the story, so it is a starting point.

### **The Duality Search**

Boje's (2001) first step is to search for dualities in the story. Searching for the dualities felt easy, like detective work. "Aha!" I would think. "There's one, just there. And here's another." Some of them I found on my own, others only in conversation. This search felt like an accessible entry into the process and left me cheerfully optimistic about what would follow. Here are the dualities that I spotted in the fragments.

- Closet/Public
- Girl/Boy

- He/She (pronouns)
- *Roommate/Lover*
- *Employee/Individual*
- *Executive/Lesbian*
- *Professional/Dyke*
- Safety/Risk
- Secret/Known
- Silence/Truth

And there are, to be sure, others I do not see. Perhaps you have noticed them, and can point them out. Maybe I will notice others later and be able to comment on them then.

I see that some of these, which I have italicized, are not very classical dualities in that they do not represent far opposites. These were harder to spot on paper and were detected/clarified/defined in conversation with my colleague. I think of them as “loose” dualities. That is, they do not represent ends of a spectrum that are extreme and exclusive. As binaries they are rather distorted I think, but now that I see them in the fragments they most certainly feel to me as though they are perched far apart on a tense continuum. For example, in the fragments, people who are my roommates share expenses but not my bed. A roommate might be anyone, not necessarily even someone I would have as a friend. Roommates are expedient. Lovers are people who I choose, though perhaps not always with sufficient care, and they are complicated, which is an opposite of expediency.

And of course employees are always individuals, but here the tension is between the individuality that I feel permitted to express as an employee, and that which I feel I must withhold in the interest of *remaining* an employee. This tension was exacerbated when I reached an executive level. At this level I was more in the public eye of the universe of employees who comprised my organization. I was more visible and therefore subject to scrutiny because, as a VP of organization development, I held a job with the potential to affect the people who judge me. Because I was lodged securely in the closet the whole time I was employed in the Fortune 500, my status as a lesbian was a subject of speculation and side-bar gossip, but was not otherwise “discussable.” Ironically, it was only when I was no longer a corporate “insider,” not until I was running my own consulting practice, that I was publicly labeled a “dyke.” The intention of the workshop participant was to insult me, to accuse me, to apply a slur to me, to insinuate that being a dyke rendered me somehow unprofessional. It is in this fragment on the workshop conversation that the genesis of safety/freedom duality lies.

The other dualities, un-italicized, seem more like true, qualitative opposites to me with plenty of shades between each end. Still, I see that even these only seem opposite based on my experience of them, based on the choices that I have made. For example, in fact secrets *are* known at least to the holder of them. Perhaps there are other words that could be better choices. In the case of secret/known, for example, perhaps secret/*public* is a better choice. And silence feels like the opposite of truth based on my reading of Adrienne Rich’s (1979) work *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*. In the absence of reading Rich, the opposite of silence might have been for me noise, or volume or chatter. As I begin to make this sort of observation, I interpret the move as an entrée to the next step in Boje’s (2001) guidelines.

### Reinterpret the Hierarchy

In the second step of his guidelines, Boje (2001) recommends undertaking a hierarchy analysis by tracing “where the rhetoric does not live up to its own expectations...show[ing] how the narrative constructs a hierarchy by privileging one term over the other” (p. 24). In this step the idea is to look beyond opposition into the ambiguity and interpenetrations of the term, to see where the duality breaks down and opposition becomes cloudy.

In my list of sometimes distorted binaries from step one, the terms on the left are terms most closely associated with my time in the closet. If we list these terms on the left without their partners we get: closet, girl, he, roommate, employee, executive, professional, safety, secret, silence.

The closet feels like an essentialized place that holds one end of all the dualities listed here. There is a myth that the closet is a good and safe place and that being “publicly” homosexual is the act that is risky and dangerous. This is not so simply and entirely true. The closet is rife with danger. So too is declaring oneself freely as a lesbian. The dangers of being in or out are only different. The sense of safety (or freedom) in either tends toward mirage. These are not dualities, in any case, where one side is positive and the other negative. Rather, both these decisions – to stay in or be out – are decisions prompted by, made necessary by, the dominant forces that insist on marginalizing queers. Heterosexuals appear to have no equivalent choices required of them on the basis of their sexual orientation (but they may be making choices about being in or out of a different closet, e.g., one associated with mental illness, or criminality).

In the Lady Kxxx story fragment, “girl” is associated with “not boy” and therefore, in the social structure of my kindergarten, is not as worthy as the only ones who (in 1964) could be astronauts. To complicate matters, in my story “girl” is also associated with “not girl” because the idea that I could like girls *and* be a girl was for many years one on which I had no linguistic grasp. So to hold both of these simultaneously seemed impossible to the child version of me. In the absence of alternatives, in the absence of knowledge of the word lesbian, I followed the lead of my friends, trying to be a girl *by* liking boys and wrestling internally with the notion that that I must be neither girl nor boy, despite the physical evidence. If I were neither girl nor boy, then my own self was “up for grabs.” Learning about Centaurs and the Minotaur in elementary school was small comfort because though they were part man, they were not part woman. Even the possibility of mermaids failed to console me, though it prompted me to excel at my swimming lessons. Until I discovered the word “lesbian” in my early teens, for me there was no “between-ness” that would actually legitimize my existence. There was no space for me to stand on the boundary separating girl and boy.

The use of the pronoun “he” is associated in the fragments with not only acceptance (which does not appear on the list though it is implied), but with safety (which does appear further down the list). For me, safety is associated with, or even dependent on, social acceptance in all of the settings with which I have experience. The use of the pronoun “he” in reference to an un-named and ambiguous companion in stories about my weekend seemed the price of admission into social circles where homophobia, or at least heterosexism, appeared as a prevalent cultural element. In my own experience, this included the predominately male circles

of middle and senior managers. Pronoun switching (substituting “he” for “she”) made it possible for me to be a part of those circles, and though we cannot be entirely sure of this, the men were likely relieved to have their own suspicions about my sexual orientation (and/or their own stereotypical images of the implications of having a power-hungry dyke in their midst) evaporate in the context of hearing from me about this boyfriend or that.

Of course, substituting pronouns, roommate for lover, and executive for lesbian left me with absolutely no sense of what these managers, my colleagues, *might* have done if I had spoken to them as clearly and honestly about my life, as they spoke about theirs. I cannot say who *might* have offered support of some kind had I only spoken the truth, named my companion, identified my roommate as my lover and bravely used the pronoun “she.” To experiment with this would have been to reveal my self as some thing, some one, beyond, above or different from an “employee” of the organization. I would have emerged in the organization as an “individual” with dimensions, a life, beyond my employment, my role and title or professional identity.

I am reminded here of Luckmann’s (1978) suggestion that...

the life-round of modern man is not of one piece. It does not unfold within one but within a variety of small ‘worlds’ which often are unconnected with each other...which, in many instances he is able to leave at will...at least theoretically (p. 282).

These worlds, she goes on to suggest, “belong to different ‘jurisdictions’ and different realms of meaning...the small lifeworlds never claim the total individual” (p. 282). To reveal myself would have been to move these worlds to an overlapping position, to juxtapose or even integrate the realms, to ask one world to claim all of me, to ask one world to allow me to claim all of myself. I will never know how this request, this invitation to accept all of me at once, would have been received by the Fortune 500. I will never know what effect it would have had on me or how it might have changed the nature of my contribution to the organization and the people who comprised it. Speaking honestly would have also dissolved the need for speculation about my sexual orientation by those with the time and inclination to pursue such matters of the imagination. This would have provided others with more choices about how to react, and I might – we all might – have been better for it. Of course, this is just as speculative now as was my colleagues’ conjecture about my sexual orientation in the absence of a definitive declaration on my part.

The decision to “come out,” though it is on some level a daily decision, is ultimately an irreversible one. There is no “going back in,” no reclaiming the secret – though people may wish that you would, ostensibly for your own protection, to keep you safe. Their concern is misguided because they do not know your closet. They do not know the unique monsters who also call it home. For my entire time in corporate I chose what felt to me like the safest dimension of the unsafe binaries: the secret, the silence. I do not have the capacity to judge this choice in my story. I do have the capacity to regret it and to be grateful for it, both in the same moment.

The executive/lesbian binary supports the unfortunately popular notion that the way women become executives is to sleep with men or to adopt their behaviors. This latter idea of manliness is often connected with the stereotypes of lesbians as somehow less feminine, less

female, than their straight counterparts. My perspective from the closet was that I would *never* become an executive if I were known to be a lesbian and that having gained that status, I would lose it if I were ever discovered. Reinterpreting this relationship, out lesbians can find themselves oddly positioned on a new common plane with the straight men who are their colleagues because women are one established area of shared interest, but that is true for many heterosexual women as well.

What strikes me is the parallel between these opposing characteristics of executive/lesbian and the binary of professional/dyke that emerges in one of the fragments. In the story of the lesbian who is passed over for promotion, my lesbianism sensitized me to the injustice of this and, it is likely, is what prompted my astute young employee to bring the story to my attention. It was this awareness, combined with my authority as an executive in the organization and my schooling regarding the power of language that prompted me to respond in ways that I considered professional, not to mention moral and ethical. The accusation by a stranger, a woman from outside the organization, that I only pursued this course of action on the basis that I myself was a dyke, and was therefore not behaving as an objective professional, startled me. On the contrary, calling a stranger a “dyke” in a public workshop at an Ivy League university fails to conform to my personal standards of professionalism – even if I am a lesbian. It is exactly my own desire to be treated professionally, regardless of my sexual orientation, which is the source of my operational definition of what constitutes professional behavior. Replying to my accuser civilly, from outside the closet, is more closely aligned to what I have come to expect from myself as a professional.

The final three binaries, safety/risk, secret/known, and silence/truth are overlapping and repeating concerns in the story fragments. An objective reader deconstructing the fragments might not have made the distinction between these three, but for me they hold a sort of recursive relationship that is important, and that becomes stranger in those story fragments where I am moving out of the closet. My efforts to liberate myself, to live an integrated approach, in my daily interactions as I conduct my business, may feel freeing, but this freedom is risky. It leaves me unsafe from the homophobia of students, colleagues, clients and potential business partners. In some of the fragments there is a simple divide. Secrets are exciting and secrets keep you safe. But we also see that this tradeoff between safety and risk is an odd interpretation of freedom. When you are in the closet you are always at risk of being “outed,” but you are somewhat less at risk of being met in the parking lot by people with baseball bats, or of being lashed to a fence, beaten and left to die. Once you are out of the closet, you are no longer at risk of being outed, having taken control of that process, but your queer public persona now puts you in harm’s way. When you are in the closet, you have only clues as to who your allies are. When you are out of the closet they make themselves known to you, but so do your enemies – often in ways that are devastating.

So the popular notion of coming out of the closet as liberation is too simple. As I move from the closet to disclosure, from silence, which Rich (1979) clarifies for us as a form of lying, to truth, the restrictions of the closet do not disappear. The restrictions only change their form. They shift from “inside” restrictions, ones that I impose on myself in the interest of bifurcating to keep the secret, to threats from the outside, threats from the secret being known that are beyond my control. These uncontrollable, outside threats appear in the midst of my attempts to integrate

the personal and professional, the public and the private, the inside story with the outside story. So the notion that there is safety in staying “in” holds complexity that for me is equivalent but different from the complexity that arises from the risk of being out. I run the risk, for example, of being asked to go back in. I run the risk, now that I am public with my minority status, of being told that I am the “wrong kind of minority.”

Still, the effort that goes into bifurcation, splitting ourselves into two of Luckmann’s (1978) small worlds so that there is no overlap, holds its own risks. These are the same sort of risks associated with the general keeping of secrets, which my partner Lxxx thought may have contributed to her cancer and by extension to her death. So there is the risk of someone opening the closet just accidentally, without malice or even intent, and discovering you there, in your “safe” place, and there is the risk that the secrets will overtake you, will make you ill, or kill you.

I begin in this step to feel that I am chasing my tail, trying to reverse a hierarchy that is nonlinear, curvaceous with dark tunnels, steep climbs, and wild descents that end with a scream and splash. The hierarchy is not hierarchical. It can be further distorted, but mostly I cannot find a way to reverse it in the classical sense of turning it inside-out or upside-down. I begin to rebel a bit against the process and decide that Boje’s third step, looking at rebel voices, is in order now.

### **Rebel Voices**

In stories told in the voice of oppressors, told from the perspective of dominance, it is easy enough to eliminate, or at least bury, the marginalized and oppressed voices and perspectives. The marginalized voices are suppressed by the dominant narrative and do not have a role in that crafted rendition of the story. They are not heard, nor even implied. The fragments here are stories told from the view of the oppressed, from a lesbian who is silenced by the dominant forces at work in the organizations and the broader cultural milieu in which she lives, but her voice, her crafted rendition of the story does not suppress the dominant voice. On the contrary, in these fragments these dominant voices are always heard directly. They are never absent. Sometimes they shout, sometimes they whisper. They are at the very least, implied through the marginalized protagonists’ interactions, actions and reactions, implied by the voice of the oppressed. They are not silenced. Remove the dominant voices, and there would be no story. *Everything* in the stories from the margins is in relationship to the dominant forces. Remove the dominant voice, and the stories collapse on themselves like the sticks of a Jenga tower ready to be rebuilt into some new structure.

There is a story of overarching cultural oppression which manifests inside corporations, schools, and social organizations. It is inescapable. The oppressor/oppression is automatically heard when the oppressed tells her story. She cannot shut it out. *I* can not shut it out. I do not have the same lever of dominance that the organizations pull to shut out and shut down her/my version of the truth when it tells its own version of the story. *The oppressor is not absent from any story.* Its role and voice in the dominant story are obvious, but its clear presence, its inextricability, its ubiquity, its articulation are so strong, that even when the oppressed intends to be the prime protagonist, she is not. In the dominant story, the oppressed can be made to disappear – easily, seemingly without effort, simply by turning the gaze away from the margins.

The dominant story fills *the* gaze of the oppressed. It does not matter where she turns her eyes, or how many times she blinks.

In other contexts, *my* voice is a rebel voice. Telling my own story is a form of rebellion, telling it here and deconstructing it myself is a form of taking power that reveals the influence of the dominant forces in my schooling, my professional, and my social lives. When I tell it, I also silence the voices of others, even those who are like me, so that my particular voice can be heard. My lovers do not have a voice here. They are oppressed like me, and I further suppress them in my own version of the story. Alison Oxxx in my high school does not have a voice. She does not express her own fear here, either a fear of being identified as a lesbian (whether or not she actually is), or of a lesbian encounter. She simply makes a statement, and I report it to examine its affect on me.

Those who might, as we speculated in step two, have supported a decision by me to come out in the work have no voice. For example, my boss Dxxx has no voice in this story, nor does my colleague Mxxx. This deconstruction process has led me to think of them as “unexercised advocates.” I mean by this that they are unable to be anything but silent advocates in the absence of my own authenticity about my sexual orientation in the context of my work in company. Though they appear in the fragments, we never hear from them. We do not know their motivation. I cannot tell you for certain where they would have stood, what they would have said or done. My story about them is that they were aware and sympathetic, and I can only guess that they were trying to sort out a way of expressing support without painting me – or them - into a corner. We were doing a dance designed to protect each other. Advocates need voice. Silenced advocates cannot advocate very easily. I did not feel protected. As agents of the dominant culture it is not likely that they needed any protection from me.

Lady Kxxx is part of the establishment that oppresses me. She provides my first felt experience with discrimination. My story does not give her a voice here, but as an oppressor she makes her presence known. I suspect you have an image of her in your mind’s eye based on teachers you have known. Your visual image of her may be clearer than your visual image of me – if you even have one – even though I am in every fragment and she is only in one. Despite her “bit part” in the story, her position seems clear – boys matter more. Yet we cannot be sure what motivated her because we do not hear from her. We do not know her particular story, so it may be that our/my assumptions about her are as unfair now as was her treatment of the girls in her school 40-plus years ago.

These fragments told from the marginalized perspective are an accusing narrative, and the dominant voices want to leap to their own defense. In my conversations and reflections during this deconstruction, they worm their way into the exchange. I hold them back, experiment with suppressing them as my own voice has been suppressed, but their will is strong. They are, after all, used to having their way.

“Lady Kxxx was a product of her time,” they suggest. “The minister stood her ground, right? The UU church has a reputation for supporting the GLBT community and she came through despite the threats.” Or “Hey, at least your company had sexual harassment training. At least they were looking out for women. That’s progressive, right?” Or “You knew you were safe,

because Dxxx let you know. You knew he would protect you. It was you who decided that keeping it a secret was part of the deal.” And even, “Look, keeping your secret let you have the upper hand. Look, you made it all the way to VP and you were a lesbian that whole time. The joke’s on them, right?”

I counter these voices that the joke is not on “them.” The joke is on all of us. I kept my secret with all my will, and people still spent time gossiping about my sexual orientation. When you keep it a secret, it takes your own energy and theirs – the dominant energy – as speculation courses through the grapevine, the veins and arteries of the organization’s communication system. As a young professional, I was raised to understand the role of organization development to be a role grounded in social capital, in relationships, most fundamentally in the willingness of others to collaborate with me as an organization development practitioner. In the fragments, there is a narrative I constructed about how I could not foster friendships inside the organization because I could not jeopardize the integrity of the succession plan. Similarly, I adopted a professional narrative that if the employees working for an organization in our conservative region knew I was a lesbian, they would be less willing to collaborate, less willing to entertain my ideas for change. This would in turn affect my ability to be successful. If I were not successful, then the company could fire me, not because I was a lesbian, but for legitimate reasons, for failure to reach the goals that depended on a fabric of shared ideas and mutual enthusiasm for change, a fabric of relationships.

Even in the safety of this deconstruction process I found myself still defending me, defending my *self*, defending the decisions I made and the actions I took in the context of the time and space in which the fragments occur. I again consider, for example, the woman who accused me of supporting the lesbian who was passed over for promotion. She accused me of using that event to sculpt the discourse of the organization only on the basis of my own status as a “dyke”, which she meant to use as a slur. In this deconstruction process, I hear myself say, “I should be grateful that she was willing to make her views known. At least she came to talk to me about it. Small steps for small feet.” I hear myself say that every conversation represents progress, even if the conversation is not a dialogue. I see this event from 7 years ago as a bizarre sort of “gift” from this woman, and I find myself grateful to her that she held this conversation “off to one side,” at a break and not in the full group. This is me feeling grateful that I was slandered *in private*. This is how I have been conditioned to accept lashings by members of the dominant community – to accept with gratitude that the cuts were not deeper. It is only in course of the deconstruction (and holding my current perspective from outside the closet) that I find myself wishing she had entered her objection into the public discourse of our workshop for exploration by the group. And I find myself speculating that it is only the “now me” who can wish for that. It is only in the course of this process that I realize I feel lucky that she did not raise it when I was not yet fully equipped to deal with it in a public setting, indeed a professional setting. And then, I am back to feeling grateful to her.

### **Interim Observations**

As we come to the close of part one (always aware that, as my grandmother was fond of telling my excited grandfather, there is nothing so insignificant in life as the score at half-time), it

seems reasonable to attempt an interim summary of where we have been, what we have seen, and what might seem to matter at this point.

To begin we looked at my story, fragments appearing as flat narratives on the page, straying from their chronology like cats, and absented from context. The text that conveys my story, and is on some level of my choosing, was subjected to my own deconstruction, done both socially with a collegial inquirer and privately in reflection. In the process of working through the first three steps of an eight step process (Boje, 2001) you the reader have accompanied me on the synthesis of a journey in which the text was explored for meanings, both intended and unintended. We have combed through for dualities present in the text and found both strict and “loose” binaries, many related to the tension associated with the closet. In the second step we experimented with reinterpreting the hierarchy represented by the binaries, extending them until they began to fracture and crumble. This reinterpretation revealed that the hierarchy is supported by assumptions that are not linear or stable, such as the presumed safety of the closet and the liberation of stepping out of it. It is in this process that the concept of bifurcation across (at least) two “small worlds” (Luckmann, 1978, p. 282) is invoked by the story. The bifurcation process I undertook in my living story (in the absence of any such language) emerges in the context of the organization in which I worked, and my attempts to preserve my status as a rising executive. The bifurcation, which in retrospect seems so fragile, seemed at the time the story was unfolding to be impenetrable. Indeed it seemed the only available and reasonable “choice” that would permit me to remain in the particular, corporate, small world, infused as it was with the dominant culture of the organization.

It is the voice of this dominant culture that is so pervasive in the third step of the deconstruction covered here: examining the rebel voices in the story. Because the deconstruction is being undertaken on a story from the margins we might expect the dominant story to be the rebel voice, and we might expect it to be fighting my efforts to silence it as I move onto center stage as the protagonist of my own story. This is not the case. The dominant voice is emboldened by my story. My story invokes the very voice that in my story, and even in the deconstruction of it, throws up barriers to constrain my actions and silences my words.

What can we conclude from these three initial steps that might matter in practice? Already we see the deconstruction revealing over and over the energy that invested in keeping an ostensible “secret” a secret, and we see the irony of that investment in the cruel returns of fear, and shutting down, shutting out, hiding with, and hiding from. There is no victory here. The toll of being a young executive in the Fortune 500 is already huge. Thirty-somethings cast into these roles are stretched into learning the art and science (and luck and irrationality) of finessing relationships, walking metaphorical high-wires in search of a mythical balances (Boje & Tyler, 2008). To be female in this milieu with only men as models was, in my experience, an added layer of complexity. When I consider the amount of energy siphoned off by the process of giving safe harbor to a secret that I believed could topple me, I am astounded I was promoted past first line manager. I now understand for the first time why I had to take six weeks of medical leave (an un-included fragment) when, as an expatriate, the added pressures of being a “foreigner from corporate” were added to the mix, and the scrutiny to which I had become accustomed went into overdrive. I want to reach out to that young woman who I was and tell her it is not worth the trouble, not worth the anxiety, not worth what I now see as a sacrifice, but I know that even at

this point I have no guarantees that the alternative would be anything but a different, and not necessarily easier, path.

A half-time point to consider, perhaps one that will tide us over until Part Two in the next issue, is the idea that organizations are being cheated by the apparent efficiencies of Luckmann's (1978) small, separate worlds. Maintaining their isolation from each other is a mechanistic process born of industrialization and scientific management stemming from Taylor's division of labor and the birth of the organizational man. It requires energy and produces heat. In the absence of fuel, the small worlds may unexpectedly collapse into each other, and in the presence of fuel there is the possibility that they may spontaneously combust. Either way they may harm the inhabitants of those worlds, without warning.

In Part Two, we'll build on these three opening steps of Boje's (2001) process to look between, behind, and around the lines of text in the story fragments, continuing the deconstruction process, going wider and deeper in our exploration of the story and its implications in organizational settings.

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## PERSPECTIVES ON PRACTICE

### A Personal Narrative of LGBT Identity and Activism

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This essay connects part of a life story—mine—with part of a reflection upon practice. Delighted as I was to be invited to write an essay for this journal on the practice of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) workplace training, it became evident to me that in order to fully address LGBT workplace training *practice*, it would befit such a piece to include a personal narrative of coming to terms with being a lesbian. The primary reason for this is that my lesbianism is what drew me to becoming an LGBT workplace equality activist, educator, and trainer. I did not seek out that as a “cause” but rather through my own life experiences, I learned about what it means to traverse through life in the late 20th century (and hopefully, well into the 21st century) as a lesbian. Additionally, I have learned how to negotiate an arguably successful life as a lesbian, including career success. I have learned about sexism, heterosexism, homophobia; I have learned and witnessed the discriminatory effects of wage discrimination as Badgett (1995) and Badgett and Frank (2007) have studied and empirically proven, and, importantly from a practice perspective, I have learned how to model for others compassion, self-confidence, and an inquisitive and curious nature. The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to describe my individual journey of LGBT identity and how that journey has informed my LGBT activism as manifested in the LGBT training and education work that I do.

#### Life Learning as a Backdrop of Activism, Training, and Adult Education

Heterosexuality persists as an organizing framework in organizational America today. Against the backdrop of unspoken assumptions, LGBT people face the never-ending constellation of decisions about disclosing identity. As a training and adult education practitioner for nearly 25 years, and as a baby boomer (though on the tail end, as I was born in 1962), I have experienced firsthand the challenges of deciding both the content and the format, as well as the delivery, of my training sessions. I began my training career, actually, on the tennis court in staid Richmond, Virginia back in the 1980s. At that time, I had indeed become aware of my lesbianism and at the age of 23 had begun a romantic relationship with a woman. It was perhaps the times—20 some years ago, when groups such as Human Rights Campaign—the political action committee that lobbies for LGBT rights—were in their infancy, before states, cities, and counties began to consider and implement protections for LGBT people, and perhaps it was the location of conservative Richmond, Virginia, but I never considered coming out to my club members. However, in retrospect it has often occurred to me that many of them suspected. This is the double bind that LGBT people engaged in the training and education of adults face. On one hand, fear of disclosure prompts LGBT people to hide their sexual minority status. On the other hand, invisibility perpetuates stigma. That is, by remaining closeted, LGBT people miss the opportunity to educate and to serve as change agents. The act of coming out is act of courage,

and it is a first step in helping to create change. I talked my way into a technical training position with a technology company and embarked on brief and disastrous forays into several different business occupations (Gedro, 2000). As I gained self-confidence as a lesbian, I began to consider ways of claiming my voice within business venues. After 10 years of self-imposed as well as societal-imposed hardship, I came out in two significant ways that set me on a path of training and education activism. The first was my encounter with who was to become my doctoral advisor in the Adult Education and Human Resource Development program at the University of Georgia. As I was hand delivering a paper to another professor, I ran into Ron. He was clearly one of my favorite professors. After we exchanged superficial greetings, I extemporaneously shifted the conversation to the substantive and asked him what he thought of the research topic of lesbians in corporate America. His reaction was one of immediate enthusiasm, and with his guidance as well as the support of a wonderful committee, I completed my doctoral dissertation entitled *Urban Cowgirls: How Lesbians Have Learned to Negotiate the Heterosexism of Corporate America* (Gedro, 2000). The second major event that emboldened me to thrust myself out of the closet was that I joined the employee resource group at my employer, BellSouth, and subsequently was elected Co-Chair. It was through the combination of scholarship at the University of Georgia and workplace activism at BellSouth that I became unwilling to settle for a work life of conformity to heterosexist assumptions.

### **LGBT Workplace Training: Out & Equal Workplace Advocates**

Out and Equal Workplace Advocates is a San-Francisco-based not for profit organization dedicated to workplace equality. Out and Equal (2008) has also developed a world-class training program that has evolved over the years, called "Building Bridges." I became involved in Building Bridges during the course of my doctoral research, after learning about the organization and responding to a national call for trainers posted on the internet. I attended and participated in a train the trainer event in Seattle, Washington in 1999 and have conducted trainings for a variety of organizations since that time. Building Bridges is a leader-led training program, designed to raise awareness and sensitivity and to help participants acquire an understanding of terminology and legal protections (and a lack thereof) as they internally scan their workplace environment to assess its level of LGBT inclusion. Participants determine an action plan for their organization to help increase LGBT awareness, sensitivity, and inclusion so that all members of the organization can thrive. I have continued to engage in this training work and, most recently, co-conducted a train the trainer session for a group of human resource practitioners as well as workplace activists. As has become increasingly apparent to me, it is impossible to disentangle my lesbian orientation and identity from my training practice because the two are inextricably intertwined.

### **Lesbian Orientation as a Backdrop for HRD and Adult Education Work**

My lesbianism, particularly when training on topics directly related to LGBT issues, works as an integral part of my training and education practice. When appropriate, I use my own stories, examples, and insights from my lived experiences as a lesbian and weave that material into my training. The use of those autobiographically and demographically based aspects of my training practice is not limited to LGBT workplace training. In several aspects of my career in human resource development (HRD) and adult education, my orientation becomes a subtext of

the training and education efforts. Over time, it has been difficult to disentangle my lesbianism from my teaching and my training.

### *Training and Consulting as Contested Terrain*

There are times when it is not safe or perhaps even appropriate to highlight my own orientation. For example, in my consulting practice I have conducted human resource training to first level managers in the defense industry. The complexity and the context of this type of training venue—that is, where I am an outside consultant training on a variety of management issues for an organization that is part of a historically conservative industry-- highlights the constant vigilance that LGBT people face even today in organizational America. When faced with situations where receptivity to LGBT issues is an unknown, I think it is still prudent for an LGBT person to remain circumspect and subtle about one's sexual minority status. As the stakes rise, and as the audience is an unknown, I have found it to be appropriate to not look for opportunities to disclose my orientation and, instead, to stay on training topics at hand.

This practice reflects the learning that the participants in my doctoral research experienced about “pre-screening” an audience for receptivity to LGBT issues (Gedro, 2000). This type of “sterile” training and consulting—consulting and training that have little to no direct relationship to sexual minority issues—remains challenging terrain for LGBT HRD practitioners. I have learned over time how to negotiate my identity within the context of a mostly heterosexist backdrop and to disclose my orientation when and where I feel safe and where I feel it appropriate.

### *Adult Education as Contested Terrain*

As a professor of Business, Management and Economics at a non-traditional college that serves adult learners, I have a unique opportunity to practice critical pedagogy. I have integrated my lesbianism into my adult education practice. As Brookfield (2000) offered:

I used to live my life according to other people's expectations. I didn't know who I was or live according to my own assumptions and beliefs. Now I've discovered who I really am –my core self- through critical reflection, and I'm living a more authentic and integrated life. (p. 46)

Because I work with adult learners who are pursuing undergraduate degrees, many times within the field of human resource management or HRD, I am in a privileged position to establish curriculum that often times includes readings, articles, writing, reflection, and discussion about issues of heterosexism, homophobia, and LGBT inclusion. More often than not, the topic of my sexuality comes up during the face to face meetings that I have with my students. The few times when it has felt unsafe, I simply neither seek nor invite opportunities for the matter to arise. At a meta-level, the way that I educate adults has become more and more “queer” over time. My lesbianism, I conjecture, democratizes my classroom and other teaching environments because I sometimes use it as a starting point to invite discussion around training ethics, workplace learning, and critical pedagogy. I am a walking, talking, breathing example for students and for clients about “other-ness.”

## Conclusion

My training practice includes subjects related to business and human resource management. I have trained restaurateurs on point of sale software; bankers on treasury and accounting software; telecommunications managers on performance management, progressive discipline, and sexual harassment; and I have trained Department of Defense accountants on a full spectrum of human resource management practices. Clearly, too, I have trained and still train on topics directly related to LGBT workplace activism. My training career has spanned years, organizations, and subjects. In each training venue, my lesbianism is present. Sometimes it is overtly present, and sometimes it is tacitly present. However, I could not be effective without having a solid sense of my sexual orientation and an astute awareness of its affects on the classroom or other training venues.

During my thirties and now into my forties, I have learned how to synthesize a fully accepted sense of self that permeates my training practice. Clients and students have given me feedback for years that I make them feel comfortable, empowered, and capable. I confidently conjecture that my own coming to terms with my identity has created a depth within me that reaches out to others, no matter what venue, and speaks not only to their minds but also their hearts that acceptance, compassion, respect, and support are wonderful characteristics of a training session.

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## PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING

### **From the Sidelines to Center Stage: Opportunities to Discover Voice and Empowerment through Web 2.0 and New Media for LGBTQ Adult Learners**

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#### **Abstract**

While many adult learners may feel hesitant to voice their opinions in a classroom, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) adults are especially aware that they are functioning in a critical, heteronormative society. However, in a climate of respect and safety they can gain confidence in sharing their true selves and opinions. An additional means of accomplishing this goal is through Web 2.0 technologies. This essay describes how LGBTQ communities have used podcasting to gain voice and empowerment on a mass scale and how lessons learned from this experience can be utilized in our adult learning classrooms. Web 2.0 new media is a vibrant opportunity to change classroom spectators to vital participants, content creators, and empowered adults.

Enabling adults to experience the greatest opportunities for growth and learning entails active learning and learner-centered environments. Yet even in these rich, interactive settings, many LGBTQ adults still hang back from full participation, authentic engagement, or disclosure of their sexual identity. This reticence and marginalization matters because our understanding of adult learners tells us learning must reach the needs, values, and beliefs of people in order for them to fully engage in reflection, critical thinking, and consideration of different world views (Cranton, 1994; Wlodkowski, 2003).

In a strange turn of events, technology, especially new media, provides powerful opportunities to cultivate authentic voices and create empowering experiences for under-represented groups (including LGBTQ adults). While technology has often been accused of destroying social interaction and creating greater distance among people, one only needs to look at the volume of activity at social networking sites to realize those assumptions are out of touch with current realities. More than twenty-six and a half million people per month visited Facebook.com in 2007 and spent over 3 hours per visit (Richards, 2007). This traffic represents 26.5 million users while MySpace.com has 105 million users. Such gregarious activity is a pro forma life for young and middle age adults in 2008 (King & Sanquist, 2008). And most savvy 15-35 year olds will tell you the way to cultivate relationships in the 21st century is via technology. These online social groups are powered by Web 2.0 technologies such as XML, Java, AJAX, scores of portable widgets, and more.

This trend is fueled by desires to not only engage in online chat, but also to create online representations. From websites to blogs, avatars to Miis™, young and older adults alike are creating virtual representations of their real, hypothetical, hopeful, or perceived selves for the world to witness. The purpose of these creations is sometimes to engage in online games or virtual environments (think Second Life™ or World of Warcraft™) and other times to discover or express their opinions, views, critiques, professional image, professional work, or inner selves.

With this rich social technological environment, adult educators have a tremendous opportunity to capture the interest of these adults and transform teaching and learning experiences. While technology's opportunities for revolutionizing education have been described in depth elsewhere (King, 2003; King & Gura, 2007), the ability to transform adult learning experiences through Web 2.0 technologies is profound. Podcasting, blogging, vlogging, and virtual communities provide the ability for under-represented groups to develop new scales of global citizenship, empowerment, and voice in formal and informal education.

Adult learners need to incorporate opportunities for critical thinking, analysis, voice, and presentation as they explore and apprehend their global participation. Furthermore, learners can create new media to cultivate lifelong learning information literacy, confidence, presentation skills, and research skills that are invaluable for success across the personal and professional lifespan. Yet, there has been little exposure in our adult learning literature to the potential for using new media in these ways.

### **Shame, Fear, Anger, Confrontation – Are Plentiful Here**

If you are not sure of the degree to which homophobia and heterosexual privilege still exist around the globe, just sit down with LGBTQ colleagues or friends and ask them to share examples. From family to school, work to government agencies, one never knows when it is safe to reveal your sexual identity. Although it is illegal in most USA states and many countries to discriminate in matters of housing and employment based on sexual orientation, it does not mean that LGBTQ people have full-fledged rights or the assurance their “official rights” will be upheld (Hill, 2006; Lester, 2007; Mule, 2007).

Add to such displays of discrimination and bias the multitude of hidden privilege denied to LGBTQ people and the list becomes incalculable. While a heterosexual couple may be readily identified at a hotel getaway as having a second honeymoon, a gay couple might have to repeatedly explain the situation to dubious, curious, or hostile hotel staff. And while a lesbian couple might be recognized in Massachusetts or California (at least today, unless it gets overruled again), they still will not have federal social security benefits to protect each other. Having to explain and navigate reactions to their relationship to loan officers, school officials, doctors, and hospital receptionists is a way of life.

Understanding these daily struggles is essential to understanding the experiences of LGBTQ adult learners. Furthermore, this greater comprehension assists educators in appreciating how LGBTQ adult learners may benefit from moving from “the sidelines” of the rest of their lives, and be “center stage” in a learning environment of safety, respect, and empowerment.

## LGBTQ Adults Grab the Global Mic

“No audition and say anything I want.”

“Take as much time as I want.”

“Absolutely FREE!”

“An instant global stage”

These descriptions of podcasting sound like the stereotypical drag queen’s dream, and they seem to lead the LGBTQ podcasting wave. A new media called audio blogging was born in late 2004 and quickly became known as podcasting (Walch & Lafferty, 2006). At the same time, a vast group of underrepresented people, yes LGBTQ adults, dominated podcasting in the first year (King, 2008b).

Podcasting includes making and distributing digital recordings via the Internet. They are usually designed as a series and have a theme or topic that ties together the episodes. Podcast episodes are distributed on the Internet and now cell phones via “push” technology of RSS (rapid simple syndication) enabling listeners to automatically receive new episodes.

The popularity of podcasting has skyrocketed since 2006. This phenomenon was largely accelerated by podcatching software such as iTunes and newer web browsers (Internet Explorer 7.0 and Mozilla’s Firefox). These browsers integrate RSS bookmark features so that separate software is unnecessary to find and listen to podcasts. From the modest 2004 start, podcasting has grown to 1.7 million podcasts linked to just one podcasting site in 2008 (Feedburner, 2008). This surge in numbers was driven by the sale of over 100 million iPods in its first year of production (Kiptronic, 2007).

The podcasting movement was frequently accompanied by the tagline “Democratization of the Media” in the beginning because it is available to all people to participate and empowering (Walch & Lafferty, 2006). These adjectives describe common traits with adult learning; therefore, considering how the LGBTQ community changed their use of this medium from 2004 to 2008 helps us understand their needs and the possibilities for application in other communities.

King and Sanquist (2008) researched this pattern and reveal that,

GLBT podcasting evolve[d] across three vectors of a matrix. These vector continuums are:

- Individual Podcasters – Organizational Productions,
- Solo Distribution (website) – First Wave Podcast Directories (Podcast Pickle, Podcast Alley) - GLBT Directories and Networks (Qpodder) - Mainstream Directories (iTunes, MS Zune network) – GLBT Entertainment Networks for General Audiences (The Gay Man’s Therapist)
- Shock Effect – Consciousness Raising of All People – Activism for GLBT People

All of these stages move towards voice and empowerment. (p. 5)

The development of new media by an underrepresented group reveals a push into the limelight by those overcoming societal and media silence and claiming their public voices. They designed their own pathway, individually, collectively, and decidedly innovatively. Stages of transformative learning (King 2005; Mezirow, 1990) are seen from disorienting dilemmas to testing and new perspectives experienced in the new LGBTQ podcasters (King 2008b). An evident pattern is that the podcasts moved from individual efforts, to consolidated directories, and social activism via LGBTQ and Allies groups. Originally used for self expression, the LGBTQ community also quickly identified how to use podcasts for communicating critical resources and information worldwide.

### **Opportunities for LGBTQ Adult Learners**

To guide podcast use in educational settings, there are now a few significant resources (King & Gura, 2007) and many powerful primary sources to learn from. The ESLPOD podcast is produced at University of Southern California and has been at the top of the podcast listening charts for several years. This podcast led the wave of the immensely popular language learning podcasts now spanning the French podcast, German podcast, Chinese podcast, Japanese podcast, to Grammar Girl, and everything in between and beyond our imagination. In addition, though many universities are distributing lectures via podcast and while this has use for second language learners or students who miss class, they are not an innovative use of the power of this technology.

Librivox.org is a global network of volunteers who record and distribute free audio books via podcast to everyone. In addition, adult learning settings can become part of this effort and make the recording of a chapter, poem, or book for a class project. This is a terrific demonstration of authentic learning that can incorporate literacy skills, presentation skills, collaboration, historical research, and literary critique, all while building global awareness and volunteerism.

In order to find an abundance of innovative educational podcasting developments, one needs to currently turn to K-12 education. King and Gura (2007) have developed a complete approach with taxonomy for considering educational podcasts, providing in-depth curricular examples across content areas and creating recommendations for sound, yet innovative podcasting in educational settings. Their emphasis includes not only using podcasts to reach content standards and objectives, but also to cultivate student collaborative and individual projects. Outcomes of these projects include critical thinking skills, collaborative learning skills, advanced 21st century learning skills, global awareness, cross-cultural communication skills, and project based learning.

### **Bringing the Potential to LGBTQ Adults**

However, the application of instructional uses of podcasting with LGTBQ adults is yet a further dimension of these possibilities. By combining the lessons learned from independent LGBTQ podcasting with what we know about educational podcasting and new media, we realize that podcasting among LGBTQ adults provides abundant opportunities for life changing outcomes. Educational podcasting serves all learners, but here LGBTQ adults can be thought of

in at least three categories: teacher created podcasts, professional development podcasts, and student created podcasts.

### *Teacher Created Podcasts*

Teacher created podcasts (King & Gura, 2007, 2009) enable educators to create materials to address the specific needs of adult learners, such as those who do not belong to dominant cultures or groups. Such materials emerge from the expertise of educators and enable them to use multiple modes of instruction to reach specific needs and learning styles of their learners and a similar larger, global audience. For example, a basic world history class could be powerfully supplemented with pre-college podcasts created by college instructors or designed by the classroom instructor to reflect recent research and interviews about historical perspectives of LGBTQ rights and issues across the globe.

Over time, another powerful feature of podcasts emerges in impact: Archives. Each podcast becomes part of a growing storehouse of learning resources that are searchable for students to access whenever they need to refresh their skills or gain more advanced learning. “Learning on demand” speaks to the culture and expectations of 21st century adults and provides all Internet users the ability to access specific and niche information more readily. For example, when visiting a podcast site that has episodes related to violence against the LGBTQ community, one could use “transgender” as a search term to return a list of all episodes related to this salient issue. Young students, young adults, and the general public are increasingly savvy with such strategies, and using a blog format as the backbone for the teacher created and instructional podcasts’ websites affords the powerful search capability without any additional effort.

### *Professional Development Podcasts*

Professional development (PD) podcasts (King & Gura, 2007, 2009) provide ongoing professional learning for educators. They serve as effective platforms for teacher to teacher learning as well as consultant, association, or corporate delivery. Transformation Education LIVE! is an example of the professional development format that includes an educator and a consultant. In fact, Episode 18 of this series is an interview of the author on the topic of LGBTQ podcasting and meeting instructional needs of LGBTQ students (King, 2008a; King & Eissinger, 2008). PD podcasts can be accessed 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week and enable educators to reach out for support, direction, and resources in the context of their needs. As teachers create those materials, they address the specific, real needs of educators from their space of experience and reflection. Fully developed PD podcasts offer opportunities to access additional resources, show notes, create online communities, and gain feedback from colleagues. The basis for this new media is not a one way radio show transmission, but instead its premise is to cultivate community and in this case a community of practice. “PD on demand”, or professional development on demand, can also cultivate a global professional community.

### *Student Created Podcasts*

The possibilities for incorporating student created podcasts into adult learning settings are limitless, including interviews, learner created training materials, role play, panel debates, talk

show formats, oral history projects, historical re-enactments, and learner performances to original productions. However, the opportunities to address specific needs of LGBTQ, enabling differentiated assignments, cultivating the expression of personal perspectives, facilitating peer and teacher validation of student work, and more, are even more impressive and powerful. In the next subsections, I discuss three stages of podcasting prevalent in educational settings: (a) planning and production, (b) facilitation, and (c) distribution and evaluation.

*Planning and production.* Podcasting enables learners to immediately work with a global audience. This reality makes their message valid and urgent; therefore, the motivation, ownership, and intensity of their related academic efforts increases. Research, scripting, negotiation with group members, editing, proofing, rewriting, producing, mastering, field testing, and more are many stages in podcast development that could be emphasized. These experiences may deftly integrate a rich storehouse of skills and targeted content learning in their assignments.

How often do our students email their homework to all their friends and family? How often do LGBTQ students feel that their real opinions, views, and new ideas are heard in the heteronormative and/or crowded classroom? Certainly, their views are not heard often enough, for either question. However, in a recent online article I discussed using new media in a teacher education course (King, 2008b). Several students took the challenge for the optional podcast format of an assignment. Once they posted their work, it urged other students to do likewise. Learners demonstrated by example that the exciting project was within their grasp; they heard the power of the experience in their classmates' voices, and they wanted to produce their own podcasting episodes.

This article is a particularly helpful example because it was *not* a technology related course and I did not instruct the students how to podcast. Only basic instructions were provided that listed materials, quick steps, and resource links. The approach is within the reach of most educators and the vibrant results are seen in not only individual learners, but also the class/community.

As with my early work in discussion boards (King, 2001), here, too I saw increased participation among marginalized or shy students who (a) created powerful public online content and (b) participated more in the classroom. One can easily realize the potential this experience holds for LGBTQ students who may be reluctant to speak up in traditional classrooms. Just as we know from transformative learning theory (King, 2005; Mezirow, 1990; Mezirow & Associates, 2000), adults need a testing ground, a proving space to test out new perspectives, views, and sometimes personas. Podcasting provides that experience for LGBTQ adults with no cost and total anonymity (King, 2008a; King & Sanquist 2008).

*Facilitation.* The literature on LGBTQ facilitation and cross cultural dialogue indicate that the strategies I used with my class to create an empowering, safe environment are important for LGBTQ learner support (Lester, 2007; Mule, 2007; Munoz & Thomas, 2006; Wlodkowski, 2003). I plan for and cultivate learner-centeredness, dialogue, discussion, and active participation. As is often the case with adult learners, the students in this class were not accustomed to this approach; therefore, I had to focus on building trust and facilitating respect of different and/or novice views and opinions. Again, these are key elements in creating a culturally

responsive classroom (Wlodkowski, 2003) and critical to creating an environment where learners can take risks.

Modeling is also a core element of my teaching style. Being in touch with my own learning style, adept at reading student responses and changing pace when needed, and having well-planned classes that include participatory activities on hand for each meeting were foundational characteristics. This approach enabled me to navigate each class session while I queried and made decisions about student needs, understanding, interest, and opportunity for teachable moments.

The approach I describe is common among many adult educators, yet it helps to reflect upon and articulate the elements included in their teaching. By engaging in reflective practice, adult educators become aware of their unexamined values, beliefs, and assumptions, what is missing from classroom interaction, and how to improve their instructional and planning decisions. As instructors we also need to be open to our transformative learning changes as we explore new ways to incorporate diverse student needs and dynamic instructional tools to produce new learning and life outcomes (King, 2005). There are profound ways that educators and learners alike may be transformed through this process of developing new strategies to serve LGBTQ adult learners.

When LGBTQ students speak out, straight students have to consider their response; thus dynamic dialogue and transformative learning opportunities are created (King, 2005). Moving from the “sidelines” to “center stage” is a prime opportunity for learners to explore and experience lessons of responsibility, consequence, law, ethics, research strategies, copyright issues, intellectual property plagiarism, and fact checking. While they might have been theoretical concepts, when students broadcast their voice, the situated learning heightens the topics’ critical nature. Vital teachable moments often emerge related to international policy, economics, globalization, free speech, political analysis, and government studies. Therefore, expertise in facilitation, breadth of experience, and content area expertise are catalysts in shaping instructional opportunities that will be dynamic and meaningful in the learning community. For instance, establishing ground rules to guide discussions and preserve safety of all class members is important when learners create content.

*Distribution and evaluation.* The final two stages of podcasting prevalent in educational settings are distribution and evaluation. Regarding evaluation, learners would create a simple blog as the home site for the class podcast series. Here they would upload audio files and RSS feed and show notes to the server.

These steps involve great opportunities for collaborative decision making, negotiation of interests, and sensitivity to the audience in marketing regarding both message and specific content. Rather than case studies and hypothetical situations, adult learners have a real life situation to work on their content related podcast projects.

The distribution process is also greatly impacted by what podcast directories the series is listed in. Podcast directories are websites dedicated to listing and hosting available podcasts by topic, genre, creator, theme, audience, and so forth. While iTunes™ is the most well known, in

practice it greatly restricts divergent or minority viewpoints. Why this is the case is likely due to its touted identity with “family” audiences that are translated to mean dominant and heteronormative groups and cultures. Indeed, iTunes™ is hosted and underwritten as a corporate venture by Apple™ and is not bound by equal access requirements. Inclusion in the directory and use of the service is based on subscriber’s agreeing to iTunes’s/Apple’s designated terms.

Participating in and discussing distribution of digital media will include deciding whether the podcast should also be listed in the 100+ other podcast directories. Such directories include PodcastPickle.com, PodcastAlley.com, Blubrry.com, Podomatic.com, and many more. (Usually a very current list can be found at Podcastingnews.com). Certainly however, it is mostly podcast creators and dedicated podcast aficionados who become aware of the more erudite directories. Recent data indicate that 85%-95% of podcast listener use iTunes™ (King & Gura, 2009) while the large majority aside from that use Google to find their podcast web sites directly (e.g., Podcastingnews.com, Feedburner.com). Not being included in iTunes™ can mean exclusion from the mainstream audience. Decisions about distribution becomes an authentic opportunity for students and teachers to dialogue, negotiate, and debate free speech, responsibility, bias, and voice and empowerment.

Evaluation of the learner created podcasts provides a profound situation for LGBTQ student learning and validation. When I introduced peer evaluation/comment projects in my class, the positive responses astounded me. These learners expounded upon and applauded the opportunity to see each other’s final work, comment, and support each other as respected co-learners. Introducing the peer-learning experience into podcasting projects can be a vital “proving ground” for all learners. However, LGBTQ learners, and other under-represented groups, will especially benefit from their classmates’ explicit support.

### **Conclusion**

One can see that in using new media with LGBTQ adult learners the focus decidedly becomes mastery of learning through articulation, voice, and understanding because learners have to prepare to speak to the world on their topic and they realize the high stakes. In addition, the classroom has a real potential of becoming a responsive, empowering, generator for cultivating a learning community. Creating new media, whether it is podcasts, blogs, wikis, or nings, means learners will be on the front line of exposure, and they will want all the resources available to be sure their presentation is best. In such a community environment, LGBTQ/straight, native/immigrant, conservative/liberal become essential to help other learners hone their argument, phrase their statement, and state their cause. LGBTQ and straight alliances can take on new dimensions of urgency and interdependency in such project-based learning communities.

The study of early LGBTQ podcasts demonstrated this community as forerunners of adoption and innovation. In much the same way the need to tangibly and responsively address LGBTQ learners’ needs in our classrooms may spur on culturally responsive instructional design and new media transformations.

## Resources

### LGBTQ Podcasts and New Media:

- 1) Podcast directories where you will find a wide variety of educational AND LGBTQ podcasts; [www.podcastpickle.com](http://www.podcastpickle.com), [www.podcastalley.com](http://www.podcastalley.com), [www.zencast.com](http://www.zencast.com), [www.blubrry.com](http://www.blubrry.com), [www.qpodder.org](http://www.qpodder.org), [www.Libsyn.com](http://www.Libsyn.com), [www.mediafly.com](http://www.mediafly.com)
- 2) Colorado Queer Straight Alliance <http://www.coqueerstraightalliance.ning.com>
- 3) Free software and podcasting assistance– <http://teacherspodcast.org/podcasting-help/>

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## BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEWS

***Transgender Workplace Diversity: Policy Tools, Training Issues and Communication Strategies for HR and Legal Professionals*, By Jillian T. Weiss, North Charleston, SC: BookSurge, 2007, 268 pages, \$18.99 (paperback).**

As workplaces have become more diverse, human resource training professionals have become aware that employee diversity training must include issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity. This book is appropriate reading for human resource professionals, workplace diversity trainers and consultants, employment discrimination attorneys, and policy developers who are dealing with transgender issues in workplace settings. The author, who identifies as a male to female transgender woman, argues that her 20 years of experience as a lawyer, law professor, and organizational diversity consultant provide the reader with a practical and academic perspective on transgender issues in the workplace. The author's goal was to write a practical guide to inform readers of basic transgender terminology, gender transition guidelines in the workplace, and employment laws protecting transgender employees, and develop the reader's cultural competence and knowledge of transgender workplace issues.

The table of contents is "issue oriented" because most human resource professionals want to know what steps must be taken in the workplace once an employee makes it known that he or she is in gender transition. The book is divided into four chapters dealing with: (a) transgender basics, (b) gender identity law, (c) policy issues and tools, and (d) sample gender transition guidelines. In addition, there is an appendix that includes sections on regulatory issues within various states, relevant Equal Employment Opportunity and Americans with Disabilities Act considerations, and summaries of important transgender legal cases.

The first chapter on transgender basics includes a thorough discussion of terminology and begins with an acknowledgement that the term transgender is an umbrella term encompassing several gender expressions along a continuum. Terms such as transvestite, cross dresser, intersex, and transsexual are defined here. The author adds that these are contested terms with contested meanings and are not universally accepted. She argues that distinctions must be made between such terms as *gender identity* (one's self identification as male or female) and *gender expression* (the expression of behavioral characteristics that are culturally associated with sex). Weiss includes a description of the American Psychiatric Association's DSM IV description of gender identity disorder and its diagnostic criteria. This may be useful information for the human resource professional who may have little awareness of the emotional components of gender transitioning. Unfortunately, placing diagnostic criteria for gender identity disorder immediately at the beginning of this first chapter makes it all too easy for some readers to view transgender employees from the pathological perspective. It would have been informative for those unfamiliar with postmodern and poststructural concepts to challenge the simplistic dichotomy of male or female, which is so often taken for granted, normalized, and institutionalized in American culture (Hill, 2006). For human resource professionals and consultants working from a social transformation or social justice framework, Weiss does make the point that in order to understand the impact of the gender transition process for the transgender employee and the observing co-workers, the human resource professional must be aware of how the socially

constructed nature of gender may influence co-workers' responses to the employee and the transgender employee's responses to co-workers.

Weiss feels that HR professionals do not necessarily have to understand all the nuances, meanings, and usages of transgender-related terminology; rather, it is important to appreciate that such differences exist. She cautions against oversimplified definitions and understanding of those who are transgender based solely on surgical status, but suggests the most significant transgender workplace issue is when an employee advises that he or she wishes to transition from one gender to another. It is at that point, according to Weiss, that "all of these theoretical considerations are irrelevant to the practice issues of what steps are necessary to accommodate the employee" (p.17). Using the World Professional Association for Transgender Health guidelines, Weiss lists the eligibility and readiness criteria for an individual seeking a gender transition. Again, this information is useful for trainers and human resource professionals who are unfamiliar with this process. Basic eligibility criteria are living for 3 months in the other gender role, maintaining employment, and acquiring a legal gender identity with an appropriate first name. Weiss also describes additional readiness requirements before one would generally be accepted as a candidate for sex reassignment surgery, for example, 12 months of hormone therapy, full-time living as the other gender, consolidation the gender identity, and participation in psychotherapy (often required by medical providers). Importantly, Weiss highlights that sex reassignment surgery is not a single procedure. For a variety of reasons (e.g., personal preference and self-understanding, availability of medical facilities, state of the art medical procedures, and financial issues), a given individual may opt for a wide array of medical and surgical intervention, only selected procedures, or none at all. The chapter concludes with ways in which medical and physical changes during the transition may impact the employee in the workplace.

The second chapter covers gender identity law and provides an overview of federal and state employment discrimination law pertaining to transgender employees. In reviewing the various state and municipal statutory definitions of gender expression, gender identity, appearance, and sex or gender discrimination, Weiss illustrates the contested nature of transgender terminology. Her intent here is not to suggest readers should become legal experts, but rather to remind us that gender identity law is evolving. Weiss joins other human resource consultants by noting that the terminology individuals use to self-identify is evolving as well. For example, *trans* has become a preferred term over *transgender* by some members of the transgender community (Shlasko, 2005).

Chapter three addresses policies that support an employee's gender transition from the employer and employee perspective. Questions about use of bathroom facilities by transgender employees are frequently presented to Weiss in her consulting practice with human resource professionals and echoes an experience described by Brainard (2008) in discussing her own reaction to a person transitioning in the workplace. Weiss describes a few legal decisions and their impact on guidelines for such matters, again illustrating the ambiguity and contested nature of statutory definitions. There are general bathroom use guidelines provided in this chapter, which are suggested to be flexibly implemented and tailored to the context of each organization. Also included in this chapter are sections on the organization's responsibility for protecting and maintaining employee records and health benefits, which is reminiscent of the call to practitioners that they be cognizant of unique situations and considerations when dealing with sexually minorities (Bettinger, 2008).

The fourth and final chapter is a useful collection of suggestions for the implementation of a gender transition policy. Included are actual sample policies and internal memos to staff for human professionals to tailor to their own organization. For example, statements regarding the organization's commitment to nondiscrimination policies, definitions to include in employee handbooks, steps to be taken by team leaders, responsibilities of the employee in transition, expectations from co-workers, and a list of identified employee assistance resources, can all be found in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a list of frequently asked questions that the author believes human resource professionals, trainers, educators, and legal professionals are likely to hear and the appropriate responses. Weiss provides a useful introduction to transgender issues for readers who may have very little previous understanding of the complexity of gender identity, and for others who may be more familiar she addresses the policy and legal information needed to implement a workplace gender transition plan. A major strength of the book is that Weiss continuously acknowledges that each workplace context is unique and strongly encourages the reader to be flexible when implementing the policy recommendations.

One shortcoming with this book is that Weiss does not provide a bibliography or index at the end. She identifies a few sources for some terminology, statutory definitions, and gender transition regulatory concerns within the chapters, but does not include a summarized listing that could serve as a future reference. Readers may find this frustrating if they seek to engage further with transgender issues.

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### **ABOUT SPECIAL ISSUE EDITOR: THOMAS V. BETTINGER**

Thomas V. Bettinger, D.Ed., is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Education (Adult Education) at Penn State University, College of Education, Department of Learning and Performance Systems. As an organizational development specialist, he also provides advisory and consultant services regarding organizational culture, knowledge transfer and workplace learning, and change management; and his professional experience spanning a variety of disciplines including vocational counseling, logistics management, financial analysis, and information technology.

His primary areas of interest within adult education and human resource development are learning both as a component and a consequence of aging and adult development; oppressed and marginalized groups to include women, people of color, those perceived as dis/abled, and sexual minorities; learning in community action and social networking groups; and computer mediated and distance learning. His two decades as a hospice volunteer underlie his appreciation of lifelong learning to include the final stages of life.

Dr. Bettinger's teaching experience includes courses in diversity and social issues, critical media literacy, and pop culture as pedagogy. He is a member of numerous professional associations as well as a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES). His scholarly writings and professional presentations cover a wide range of topics including learning in midlife, blended learning, workplace diversity training, issues dealing with sexual minorities, and factors influencing occupational choice.

## NEWS AND NOTES

### **Francophone Academy of Lifelong Learning Advocacy**

Bamako, Mali, October 3-13, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.icae.org.uy/>

### **Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education 2009 Conference**

Roanoke, VA, October 5-6, 2009

Conference website: <http://vaace.org/>

### **Jossey-Bass Online Teaching and Learning Conference**

Online, October 6-8, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.onlineteachingandlearning.com/>

### **Adult Higher Education Alliance 2009 Annual Conference**

Chicago, Illinois, October 6-9, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.ahea.org/conference/annual.htm>

### **10th Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference**

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, October 8-10, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/iiqm/AQM2009.cfm>

### **European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA): Gender Network Conference**

University of Hull, UK, October 8-10, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.hull.ac.uk/cll/esreagender>

### **Active Citizenship: Democratic Practiced in Education: 10<sup>th</sup> ISSA Annual Conference**

Bucharest, Romania, October 14-16, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.issa.nl/>

### **Midwest Research to Practice in Adult, Continuing, Extension, and Community Education Conference**

Chicago, IL October 21-23, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.neiu.edu/~hrd/mwr2p09/>

### **Western Region Research Conference on the Education of Adults (WRRCEA)**

Bellingham, Washington, October 23-25, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.wvu.edu/wrrcea/>

### **The American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Annual 2009 Conference**

Cleveland, Ohio, November 3-6, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.aaace.org/>

**Independent Sector 2009 Annual Conference**

Detroit, Michigan, November 4-6, 2009

Conference website:

<http://www.independentsector.org/annualconference/2009/index.html>

**European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA): Research Network on Adult Educators, Trainers, and Their Professional Development**

Thessaloniki, Greece, November 6-8, 2009

Conference website:

<http://www.esrea.org/content/1/c6/07/08/21/ESREA%20ReNAdET%20-%20Second%20Call%20for%20proposals.pdf>

**Annual American Evaluation Association 2009 Conference**

Orlando, Florida, November 11-14, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.eval.org>

**The 8<sup>th</sup> International Transformative Learning Conference**

Hamilton, Bermuda, November 18-20, 2009

Conference website: <http://transformativelearningbermuda.com/>

**The 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Academy of HRD (Asian Conference)**

Bahrain or Egypt, December 1-5, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.ahrd.org>

**2009 AHRD International Research Conference in Asia and MENA**

Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, December 12-15, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.ahrd.org>

**The 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability**

Cuenca, Ecuador, January 5-7, 2010

Conference website: <http://onsustainability.com/conference-2010/>

**The 8th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Education**

Honolulu, Hawaii, January 7-10, 2010

Conference website: <http://www.hiceducation.org>

**The 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Technology, Knowledge and Society**

Berlin, Germany, January 15-17, 2010

Conference website: <http://techandsoc.com/conference-2010/>

**24<sup>th</sup> Annual International Self-Directed Learning Symposium**

Cocoa Beach, Florida, February 3-6, 2010

Conference website: <http://www.sdlglobal.com/>

**The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Nationwide AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival**

Dublin, Ireland, February 22-26, 2010

Conference website: <http://www.adultlearnersfestival.com/>**Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) 2010 International Conference**

Knoxville, Tennessee, February 24-28, 2010

Conference website: <http://www.ahrd.org>**European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) 2010 Conference:  
“Life History and Biography Network”**

Växjö, Sweden, March 4-7, 2010

Conference website: <http://www.esrea.org/>**SoTL Commons: 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual International Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching  
& Learning**

Statesboro, Georgia, March 10-12, 2010

Conference website:

<http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ijstotl/conference/2010/index.htm>**Standing Conference for Management and Organization Inquiry**

Alexandria, Virginia, March 25-27, 2010

Conference website: <http://scmoi.com/>**The 11th Annual White Privilege Conference**

LaCrosse, Wisconsin, April 7-10, 2010

Conference website: [www.uccs.edu/wpc](http://www.uccs.edu/wpc)**The 48<sup>th</sup> Annual International Performance Improvement Conference**

San Francisco, California, April 17-22, 2010

Conference website: <http://www.ispi.org>**The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida International University College of Education Research  
Conference**

Miami, Florida, April 24, 2010

Conference website: [http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research\\_conference/](http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/)**American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2010 Annual Meeting**

Denver, Colorado, April 30-May 4 2010

Conference website: <http://www.aera.net>**The 27<sup>th</sup> Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research Conference**

Brantford, Ontario, Canada, May 13-15, 2010

Conference website: <http://www.qualitative.ca/>**American Society for Training and Development 2010 International Conference and  
Exposition**

Chicago, Illinois, May 16-19, 2010  
 Conference website: <http://www.astd2009.org/2010.html>

**The 6<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry**  
 University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, May 26-29, 2010  
 Conference website: <http://www.icqi.org/>

**The 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference on HRD Research and Practice across Europe Conference**  
 Pecs, Hungary, June 2-5, 2010  
 Conference website: <http://www.ahrd.org>

**The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual International Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference**  
 Toronto, Canada, the week of June 14th, 2010  
 Conference website: <http://www.ptoweb.org>

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on the Inclusive Museum**  
 Istanbul, Turkey, June 29-July 2, 2010  
 Conference website: <http://onmuseums.com/conference-2010/>

**The 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities**  
 Los Angeles, California, June 29-July 2, 2010  
 Conference website: <http://thehumanities.com/conference-2010/>

**The 6<sup>th</sup> International Mixed Methods Conference**  
 Baltimore, Maryland, July 7-11, 2010  
 Conference website: <http://www.mixedmethods.leeds.ac.uk/index.htm>

**2nd Paris International Conference on Education, Economy and Society**  
 Paris, France, July 21-24, 2010  
 The deadline for manuscript submission: October 10, 2009  
 Conference website: <http://www.education-conferences.org>

**The 26th Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning**  
 Madison, Wisconsin, August 3-6, 2010  
 Conference website: <http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/>

**2010 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management**  
 Montreal, Canada, August 6-10, 2010  
 Conference website: <http://meeting.aomonline.org/2010>

**6th ESREA European Research Conference: Adult Learning in Europe - Understanding Diverse Meanings and Contexts**  
 Linköping, Sweden, September 23-26, 2010  
 Conference website: <http://www.esrea.org/pub/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=10256&a=70773>

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The mission of *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development* is to promote all aspects of practice and research that explore issues of individual, group, and organizational learning, wherever they may be located and focuses on current research and ideas in adult education, human resource development, and related fields. We are interested in honoring work done in urban, suburban, rural, and international contexts.

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