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Lesbian, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgendered, and Queer (LGBTQ) People and Adult Education: An Examination of Literature in Adult Education 2010-2020

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Lesbian, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgendered, and Queer (LGBTQ) People and Adult Education: An Examination of Literature in Adult Education 2010-2020

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Abstract

We discuss our review of LGBTQ issues in adult education journals between 2010 and 2020. We pose several topics for discussion based on our findings.

Keywords: LGBTQ, literature review, adult education

In recent decades, the field of adult education has grappled with issues related to the LGBTQ community in their peer-reviewed scholarly publications. Schmidt et al. (2012) conducted an integrative literature review on LGBTQ issues in human resource development (HRD). They analyzed 61 documents published between 1994 and 2009 from peer-reviewed conference proceedings, monographs, and journal articles. Topics included: identity development, pedagogy/classroom issues, social change and policy, research approaches and needs, and workplace and organizational issues.

Given the recent developments on LGBTQ issues and rights, including marriage equality and workplace protections, we wanted to know how scholars reviewed this topic in *adult education publications* from 2010 to 2020. This study is part of a more extensive study on how LGBTQ issues were viewed in the adult education and HRD literature. Like Schmidt et al. (2012), we wanted to know the topics covered, research methods used, and topics or trends that could inform future research. We hand-searched publications and analyzed 41 articles focused on the LGBTQ community. The publications examined included: *Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference Proceedings*, *Adult Education Quarterly*, *Adult Learning*, *Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings*, *Adult Education in Global Times Conference Proceedings (2020)*, *Education and Training Journal*, *European Journal of Education*, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, and *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*.

Preliminary findings indicate that more articles were published between 2010 and 2014 (27) than between 2015 and 2020 (14). Topics include workplace issues (8), identity, (15) health concerns, (7) classroom/climate issues, (2) educational methods (5), and research approaches (4). Of the 24 empirical articles, 22 used qualitative methods and two quantitative methods. The remaining articles were conceptual or informational articles or position papers. Workplace issues included navigating the LGBT identity at work (Bowman, 2010). Articles on identity issues focused on intersecting identities such as spirituality and the LGBTQ identity (e.g., Betts, 2012). Papers on health issues concerned LGBT individuals and their smoking habits (Bowman & Bryant, 2011) and alcoholism (Gedro, 2014). Classroom/climate issues concern the lack of representation of LGBTQ individuals in the ESL curriculum (Rhodes & Coda, 2017) and LGBTQ individuals feeling welcome in the classroom (Grisset et al., 2016). Educational methods included a discussion of using autoethnography to teach critical thinking skills (Misawa, 2014). Last, there were articles on how various research methods are used (Misawa, 2012).

Bettinger (2010) mentions several challenges with LGBTQ studies in adult education, including a limitation of the research methods used, a reliance on convenience or snowball sampling, and treating the LGBTQ community as monolithic. We also found a limitation in research methods and reliance on convenience and snowball sampling.

We aim to promote a dialogue on LGBTQ issues in adult education literature. Potential discussion questions considering our preliminary findings include:

- (1) What could be some reasons for the decrease in articles concerning the LGBTQ community from 2015 to 2020 compared to those published between 2010 and 2014?
- (2) Why is there a lack of quantitative and mixed methods studies on LGBTQ issues in adult education?
- (3) What are some methodological challenges in conducting LGBTQ research?
- (4) What are some personal challenges in conducting LGBTQ research?
- (5) What future research should be conducted in this area?

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