

Evaluating AHRD Research Using a Feminist Research Framework

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Over 600 AHRD Proceedings papers from 1996 to 2000 were analyzed according to a feminist research framework. Although knowledge in HRD is being produced through both traditional and nontraditional methodologies, few studies recognize gender and race/ethnicity as a category of analysis. Nearly absent from the literature are studies concerned with women/diverse people's experience; asymmetrical power arrangements; problems of racism and sexism; and advocacy of social justice and change. Implications for research are discussed.

Human resource development (HRD) is an evolving discipline that is in the process of creating and validating knowledge. Little has been written about HRD research itself (Hixon & McClernon, 1999; Jacobs, 1990; Sleezer, Sleezer, & Pace, 1996; Sleezer & Sleezer, 1998). Existing studies of HRD research have investigated journals publishing HRD research (Hixon & McClernon, 1999; Sleezer, Sleezer, & Pace, 1996; Sleezer & Sleezer, 1998) and analyzed study context and methods (Hixon & McClernon, 1999). Arnold (1996) examined the 1994 and 1995 proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) conference according to the type of research and tools used to discuss findings, and van Hooff and Mulder (1997) described the contents and characteristics of research appearing in the 1996 AHRD conference proceedings. They found that most researchers conduct studies of individual development and on the development of HRD as a field. Key research issues include integrity, globalization, teams, employee development, on-the-job learning, new technologies, transfer, evaluation, organizational change, training effectiveness, partnership research, and roles in HRD. HRD has an impressive and diverse body of research. As the field emerges it is important not only to continue existing research but also to critically assess what is and is *not* being studied.

HRD as a discipline has not exceedingly concerned itself with issues of diversity, equality, power, discrimination, sexism, homophobia, racism, or other similar issues in organizations. Yet, these challenges pervade both the workplace

and society. Governmental policies, business practices, and research agendas lag behind the pace of workplace diversification. Fernandez observes, “corporate America as a whole, has failed to effectively address the challenges posed by diversity, particularly with regard to racism and sexism” (1999, p. 3). Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) suggest that discrimination in organizations is so deeply embedded culturally that it is practically indiscernible. Whether you consider race or gender, the figures are grim. Beck (1998) reports that 99 percent of all American women will work for pay at some point in their lives. Although women’s workforce participation has steadily increased and shows no sign of diminishing in the new millennium, women trail men in pay, promotion, benefits, and other economic rewards (Knocke & Ishio, 1998). Despite the progress over the last fifty years, about half of the world’s workers are in sex-stereotyped occupations, and women work in a narrower range of occupations than do men. Rowney and Cahoon (1990) suggest that women find it easier to obtain leadership positions at lower levels in the hierarchy. According to their figures, women hold only 23 percent of managerial positions in Canada, a proportion that is similar to the United States (24 percent) and the United Kingdom (19 percent). They found, in a sample of 423 organizations, that 30 percent of first-line supervisors were female, whereas only 17 percent of middle managers and 8 percent of executives were women. Despite more equal opportunity, women are still segregated into typically “female” careers, and the wage gap persists. Women earn 76 cents for every dollar men earn (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998), with the average managerial-level differential at 74 cents. The data worsen based on race. African American women earn 58 cents, Hispanic women earn 48 cents, and Asian/other women earn 67 cents (Catalyst, 1997). A recent Congressional study shows that the wage gap has actually worsened by 21 cents for women managers from 1995 to 2000 in entertainment, communications, finance, insurance, and retailing (Becker, 2002).

Women at the top levels are still a rarity comprising only 10 percent of senior managers in Fortune 500 companies. Fewer than 4 percent of women hold positions of CEO, president, executive vice president, and COO, and less than 3 percent of top corporate earners are women (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). Carly Fiorina became the first woman CEO of a Fortune 100 company when she was named CEO of Hewlett-Packard during 1999. She is one of only three women CEOs in the Fortune 500. Dobosz (1999/2000) notes, “Fiorina, briefly forgetting her math, cavalierly told the press that her appointment proved that there was no glass ceiling” (p. 21). The glass ceiling is alive and well, although Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) suggest it has gone “underground.” They explain:

Today discrimination against women lingers in a plethora of work practices and cultural norms that only appear unbiased. They are common and mundane—and woven into the fabric of an organization’s status quo—which

is why most people don't notice them, let alone question them. But they create a subtle pattern of disadvantage, which blocks all but a few women from career advancement [p. 128].

Hultin and Szulkin (1999) studied Swedish workers to investigate gender wage inequality, specifically whether earnings were affected by the gender composition of the establishments' managerial and supervisory staff. They found that "gender-differentiated access to organizational power structures is essential in explaining women's relatively low wages" (p. 453). They emphasize that gender composition in hierarchical power structures should be considered an important part of research to increase our understanding of gender wage inequity. They conclude that, "Power relations in work organizations are of crucial importance for understanding how gender inequalities in financial rewards are generated and sustained in the labor market" (p. 465).

Workplace HRD is not exempt from this type of systemic discrimination. Knoke and Ishio (1998) conducted longitudinal data analysis on a cohort of young workers to document that women's participation in company training programs was at a significantly lower rate than men's. Their study was done to evaluate whether reports of a demise of the gender gap in company training based on incident levels observed in cross-sectional surveys were accurate. Knoke and Ishio (1998) indicated that:

Our principal conclusion is that the gender gap in company job training remains far more robust, tenacious, and resistant to explanation than previous researchers had indicated. This discovery admonishes both firms and social researchers to pay more attention to the ways that employees' genders interact with private-sector policies and practices [p. 153].

This study was undertaken heeding pleas for more gender sensitive research (Hultin & Szulkin, 1999; Knoke & Ishio, 1998) and recognizing Meyerson and Fletcher's (2000) argument that discrimination is embedded so deeply that we often do not see it.

Problem Statement

HRD is an evolving discipline. Now is the time to question the theoretical frameworks and practices defining the field before they become embedded and serve to simply reinforce the status quo. HRD researchers must explore the assumptions underlying their research, consider the beneficiaries of research, reflect on areas yet unexplored, and question the value of HRD research according to its impact on theory, practice, organizations, communities, and employees.

Research questions in the social sciences have traditionally been conceptualized without consideration of women (Fine, 1985; Lykes & Stewart, 1986; Unger, 1983), and HRD is no exception. Much HRD research reveals an

agenda driven by management interests focused primarily on learning and performance. Leimbach and Baldwin (1997) identify the characteristics of effective HRD research as being customer driven, linked to value creation, short in duration, and rigorous. These characteristics are important in HRD research; however, they overlook issues related to women and other diverse (racial or ethnic) individuals, power relationships, social context, or social and political change. Employees are not even mentioned in the characteristics.

The purpose of this inquiry is to address two issues. The first is, to what degree is HRD research using feminist inquiry? The second is, what are some underaddressed dimensions for the emerging field of HRD?

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a feminist research framework. What does it mean to have a feminist lens? Quite simply, it means to look at the world from a woman's perspective honoring the common experiences and histories of women in society. It does not mean excluding or devaluing men. Any research that uses a feminist lens is research that is informed on the current and former status of women in society. A feminist—at the most simplistic level—is a person who seeks economic, social, and political equality between the sexes. Feminists participate in and/or support organized activity to advance women's rights and interests. Acker, Barry, and Esseveld (1983) define feminists as engaged in acknowledging the exploitation, devaluation, and often oppression of women; making a commitment to changing the condition of women; and adopting a critical perspective toward dominant intellectual traditions that have ignored or justified women's oppression. Pritchard (1994) suggests that "Feminist critique starts with 'women' or 'women's issues' but goes beyond to the impact of gender relations and gendered conditions of human development in all spheres of thought and action" (p. 42). This means that feminist research is concerned not only with gender inequality, but also with issues related to race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and physical ability.

Feminist research attempts to conduct examinations with a theoretical lens that is cognizant of the structural inequalities that frame the lives of women. A major tenet said to drive feminist research is the obligation to deliver "a critique of traditional concepts and structures that have marginalized women materially and psychologically, in the world and even in their souls" (Patai, 1991, p. 139). While the common ground of living in a patriarchal world unites all women as sufferers of gender oppression, denying the structural inequalities that privilege some over others serves to reproduce patriarchy and is inconsistent with feminist values. Therefore, feminist research has tended to be ever mindful of issues of race, class, and sexual orientation.

Conduit and Hutchinson (1997) summarize five strategies viewed by feminist researchers as needed to create change and measure progress. These

include: (1) providing women access and encouragement to enter the world of work, politics, and knowledge production; (2) reclaiming the works of previously absented women (or absent treatments of women) to what is considered the fundamental canon of knowledge in a given discipline; (3) adding women into the pot of “the human subject” in all types of research where they have been previously represented only through their absence; (4) turning feminist eyes of diverse types to a reexamination of the fundamental theories, mechanisms of analysis, and primary values that have given shape to our epistemological techniques and our ontological assumptions; and (5) ascertaining how adding women and feminism to the mix at so many levels has changed the kinds of questions asked, the types of policies attended to, and the categories of research pursued.

Feminist critique examines power in social and political institutions and the values and communication patterns that manifest themselves in both abstract and concrete patterns. Feminist critique has revolutionized workplace analysis and the ways knowledge is constructed (Pritchard, 1994). See Bierema (1998a, 1998b) for further explanation about feminist research in HRD.

Methodology

We conducted a content analysis of Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) conference proceedings from 1996 to 2000 using the proposed feminist research framework. A feminist framework was selected because we sought to evaluate HRD research using the most expansive and critical lens available. Feminism is expansive in that it encompasses all oppressed groups, including women, and it is critical of the patriarchal status quo that permeates every institution in society, including research. Feminist research is concerned with eliminating all forms of oppression, thus it was suitable for considering research on diverse populations. Worell (1996) credits feminist psychologists with introducing a dialogue that challenged prevailing structures of knowledge creation. Feminist research is grounded in assumptions that, like most other social institutions, the process of knowledge creation and dissemination has historically been the province of white men. Women’s experience and knowledge has traditionally been excluded or overlooked in social science research. During the last two decades, feminist social scientists have critiqued the research process and provided definitions of feminist research.

Feminist Framework

Bierema (1998a, 1998b) conducted an exhaustive review of the literature on feminist research and a preliminary analysis of the 1997 AHRD proceedings. Based on the literature review, Worell and Etaugh’s (1994) framework defining feminist inquiry was selected and modified as the model to evaluate AHRD research. Worell and Etaugh (1994) synthesized feminist theory and research

in psychology and other disciplines to establish “Themes and Sample Variations in Feminist Research.” Worell (1996, p. 476) adapted the list and suggests that feminist research:

1. Challenges traditional scientific inquiry
2. Focuses on the experiences and lives of women
3. Considers asymmetrical power arrangements
4. Recognizes gender as an essential category of analysis
5. Attends to language and the power to “name”
6. Promotes social activism and societal change

We carefully studied this framework and modified it for the present study to make it appropriate for assessing HRD research (see Table 1). Each will be briefly discussed.

Challenges Traditional Scientific Inquiry. Research that challenges traditional scientific inquiry requires the researcher to reject the assumption of a truly objective science that is free from culture, history, or experience of the observer. In addition to acknowledging her subjectivity, the researcher also ensures that participants do not become objects to be manipulated, but rather collaborators in the process. The challenge to traditional inquiry also strives to identify and correct aspects of sexism and bias in scientific research procedures by extending the populations studied beyond white, middle-class, college-student samples and instead studying populations that are relevant to the questions being asked. Correcting such biases means that categories other than women are also included based on race, class, physical ability, or sexual orientation. Feminist research values a range of research methods as legitimate. In other words, it does not favor qualitative approaches over quantitative approaches, but rather is more concerned with the intentions and practices of the researcher.

Focuses on the Experiences and Lives of Women. This second component strives to affirm women’s strengths, resilience, and competence. This can be accomplished in HRD through discovering women’s contributions to HRD research/history and valuing women as a legitimate target of study. The goal is to bring women’s voices into the knowledge-creation process and reduce oppressive practices, respectively. This aspect also discards the traditional notion of comparing women to a male norm and acknowledges that the category of “woman” (or African American, or lesbian) is versatile and that there is no one such category that can possibly represent all women. Instead, it explores women based on ethnic and racial identities, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability, age, parenthood, and employment status, among other issues. This category also encourages research questions grounded in personal experiences of women researchers that are relevant to women’s lives, exploring topics such as sexual harassment, reproductive processes, employment segregation, discrimination, and work/life balance. Because feminist research is concerned with all types of oppression, the focus might extend

Table 1. Feminist Framework for Evaluating HRD Research

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1. Challenges Traditional Scientific Inquiry
 - Rejects the assumption of truly objective science free from culture, history, and experience of the observer.
 - Restructures the polarity of objective-subjective; “subjects” should not become objects to be manipulated by the researcher but collaborators in the process.
 - Identifies and corrects multiple elements of sexism and bias in scientific research procedures.
 - Affirms that raw data never speak for themselves and that all data require categorization and interpretation.
 - Emphasizes the researcher as an individual who interacts with participants in meaningful ways that enrich both the observer and the observed.
 - Produces a more inclusive science that reflects alternative realities, including multiple perspectives by both researcher and participants; expanding the diversity of all person’s involved; and recognizing that reality is created in part by the scientific process.
 - Extends the populations studied beyond white, middle-class, college-student samples, studying populations that are relevant to the questions being asked.
 - Values a range of research methods as legitimate, asserting that qualitative, quantitative, ethnographic, and other methods of gathering data may be useful for different purposes and may reveal unique information.
 2. Focuses on the Experiences of Women/Diverse Groups
 - Challenges the category of “women” by exploring diversity.
 - Affirms women’s strengths, resilience, and competence.
 - Discovers women’s contributions to HRD research/history.
 - Values women as a legitimate target of study.
 - Studies women apart from the standard of the male norm.
 - Questions the category of “woman” as representative of all women.
 - Recognizes/explores sources of variation, such as ethnic and racial identities, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability, age, parenthood, and employment status.
 - Encourages research questions grounded in personal experiences of women researchers.
 - Encourages research questions relevant to women’s lives regarding, for example, sexual harassment, reproductive processes, employment segregation, discrimination, and work/life balance.
 - Rejects sex-difference research as basic to our understanding of women or of men, and recognizes that the differences among women and among men are greater than the differences between them.
 - Constructs methods of research targeting issues of importance to women’s lives, such as hostility to women, traditional gender-role beliefs-methods that may illuminate other observer relationships and bias against women.
 - Studies women in the context of their lives and natural milieu, and avoids “context-stripping” through laboratory approaches that reduce complexity and individuality.
 - Attends to women’s strengths and capabilities as well as to their problems, and researches women’s competency and resilience.
 - Views observed gender differences in the context of power dynamics and women’s expected socialized role behaviors rather than as differences embedded in biology.
 3. Considers Asymmetrical Power Relationships
 - Seeks empowerment of all girls and women.
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(Continued)

Table 1. Feminist Framework for Evaluating HRD Research (Continued)

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- Recognizes women's subordinate status in society as based on unequal power distribution rather than deficiencies, and explores power's influence on the quality of women's lives.
 - Considers differences among women as mediated by power differentials related to opportunities available based on color, economic sufficiency, age, sexual orientation, and the like.
 - Attends to privilege and privation as sources of questions.
 - Examines women's health concerns within the context of power arrangements; for example, maternity leave issues.
 - Studies interpersonal relationships within the context of patriarchal power arrangements.
 - Explores the basis of stereotyped female characteristics such as sociability, nurturance, or passivity in the context of unequal power relations, pointing out that what appears natural may be framed by the politics of power.
 - Shifts attributions of responsibility from victim to perpetrator.
 - Seeks strategies leading to women's empowerment.
4. Recognizes Gender (and/or Diversity) as an Essential Category of Analysis
- Points out the multiple conceptions of gender and diversity, and challenges the use of gender alone as an independent variable that explains observed behavior.
 - Explores the functions of gender as a stimulus variable that frames expectations, evaluations, and response patterns.
 - Recognizes gender as a social construction based on power arrangements, and views observations attributed to gender in the context of power asymmetries.
 - Emphasizes the situational context of gender and gendering as an active process that structures social interactions.
5. Attends to Language and the Power to "Name"
- Creates public awareness of hidden phenomena by identifying and naming them, as in sexual harassment, and initiates research on hidden phenomena based on the process of naming.
 - Restructures language to be inclusive of women by rejecting the generic masculine and promoting a gender-free language system.
 - Renames and restructures research topics.
 - Reduces polarity between private and public in women's lives, such as renaming women's work, concepts of family, and the appropriate placement of these within private and public domains.
 - Recognizes that language frames thought, and vice versa; pays attention to syntax as power-driven by, for example, reversing the obligatory ordering of male/female, boy/girl, men/women.
6. Promotes Social Activism and Social Change
- Reconceptualizes theories, methods, and goals to encompass possibilities for social change, toward reductions in power asymmetries and promotion of gender justice.
 - Creates a science that will benefit rather than oppress women and that will correct as well as document the prevalence of inequity, illness, violence, and so on.
 - Remains cognizant of how research results may be used, and promotes responsible applications of research findings.
 - Directs personal involvement and action to initiate or support changes in policies, practices, and institutional structures that will benefit women and correct injustices.
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Source: Adapted from Worell and Etaugh (1994) and Worell (1996).

beyond women to include the personal experiences of ethnic minorities or the disabled (or other marginalized groups) in the workplace.

Considers Asymmetrical Power Arrangements. The third category seeks empowerment of all girls and women, and others who are oppressed in society. It distinguishes women's subordinate status in society as based on unequal power distribution instead of deficiencies and explores the influence of power on women's lives. This category considers differences among women as mediated by power differentials related to opportunities available based on color, social economic status, age, sexual orientation, and so on and studies interpersonal relationships within the context of patriarchal power arrangements. It may also extend to a consideration of asymmetrical power relationships among other marginalized groups in the workplace.

Recognizes Gender (and/or Diversity) as an Essential Category of Analysis. The fourth category identifies multiple conceptions of gender and diversity. This perspective also challenges the use of gender only as an independent variable that explains observed behavior. This category recognizes gender as a social construction based on power arrangements and views observations attributed to gender in the context of power asymmetries. It also emphasizes the situational context of gender and gendering as an active process that structures social interactions.

Attends to Language and the Power to "Name." The fifth category creates public awareness of hidden or unspoken phenomena such as sexual harassment, heterosexism, language rendering women invisible, and the private lives of women or other oppressed individuals. The invisibility of these issues in both research and practice only serves to reinforce inequitable systems of power. Naming is important since it precedes change, and women's voices have been silenced, ignored, or forgotten in previous research.

Promotes Social Activism and Societal Change. The sixth and final category charges researchers with reconceptualizing theories, methods, and goals to promote possible social change, reduce power asymmetries, and support gender justice. This aspect is also critical of how research knowledge is depicted and acknowledges that sometimes it oppresses rather than benefits women, such as by portraying them as diseased, deficient, or otherwise incomplete. This aspect also advocates a wide and varied dissemination of research so that it is accessible to *all* women, not just those of privilege. It also promotes the researcher's direct and personal involvement in taking action to initiate or sustain changes in policies, practices, and institutional structures that will benefit women and correct injustices.

To summarize, the purpose of feminist research is to challenge the traditional assumptions and practices of research inquiry, affirm women's (or other oppressed employees') value and contributions as women (not in comparison to men), examine asymmetrical power relationships that marginalize and oppress women, recognize gender as an essential category of analysis, create awareness of how language renders women invisible

and unspoken issues perpetuate oppression, and finally, advocate social action and change.

Data Sources

We selected AHRD conference proceedings from 1996 to 2000 for analysis rather than *Human Resource Development Quarterly* (HRDQ) or other journals, as we believe the proceedings provide a broader, more comprehensive view of all HRD research, not just research that is published in refereed journals. The over 600 papers evaluated encompassed a high volume of research, a wide range of topics, and an international scope. The AHRD conference proceedings are published at every AHRD conference, the major conference in the HRD field, and include all the peer-reviewed papers accepted and presented at the conference.

Data Analysis

Six hundred seventy-seven proceedings papers were critically reviewed for this study, and a content analysis method was applied. Patton (1990) defines content analysis as “the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data” (p. 381).

Coding According to Framework. The analysis of the studies was an inductive process. Each paper was coded to evaluate whether it met any of the six categories. All papers were considered. Some papers, such as forum debates or articles on how to publish in journals, were not considered in the analysis and were coded “other.” After eliminating these papers, 655 were analyzed according to the feminist research framework. Data were recorded on a spreadsheet. Papers qualified for each of the six categories if they met one or more of the six points specified by the Feminist Framework for Evaluating HRD Research.

Intercoder Reliability. Intercoder reliability is suggested to assess the extent to which content classification produces the same results when the same text is coded by more than one coder (Weber, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure intercoder reliability, we had multiple discussions about how studies would qualify for each category and discussed studies that were questionable regarding their fit with the framework and that we coded differently. We also coded the same fifty studies in each year and compared our coding before completing the full analysis by volume. We talked at length about what should be considered as advocating social change, how much we could infer in the analysis, and what would exclude a study. We are aware that organizational development and change has the potential to create workplace equity; however, we took a conservative approach to attributing the advocacy of social justice and change as a criteria. We only considered articles that made a strong statement advocating organizational change and that addressed issues of diversity or inequity. We also assessed articles that had the potential for social

impact. Above all, we decided that social justice and change could not be inferred in our analysis, but rather had to be overtly stated by the author(s).

Coding of Gender. Based on an earlier critique of our work, we went back to the data to recode and record the gender of the first author of multiauthored studies. We tracked the gender of just the first author since that person is primarily responsible for the conception and execution of a research project. Although we identified gender of first author, this in no way implies that women have a broader or more feminist view of research. Feminist research is also grounded in identifying the positionality of the researcher, and we felt it was valid to attempt to measure whether women or men were engaged more often in feminist research.

Examples of Feminist Research. Examples of some of the studies that met all six categories include Stokes's (1996) ethnographic case study examining the subjective interpretations of corporate leadership experiences among African American women in entry- and executive-level management positions. Stokes developed a taxonomy of adverse leadership experiences and concluded that the participants had adverse leadership experiences attributed to both gender and ethnicity. Biswas and Dick (1996) examined the aspects of the relationship between organizational culture and human resource management in a British police constabulary. They found that employee development practices create an exclusionary culture, making the implementation of equal opportunity policies difficult. McDonald and Hite (1996) conducted an exploratory study examining factors that influence women's access to management development and revisited how four major HRD initiatives of training, career development, mentoring, and succession planning may assist women's advancement. In another study, Hite and McDonald (1999) qualitatively and quantitatively assessed the viability of a women's network within an organization that had ceased meeting. They conclude that women's networks need to be critically assessed and identify both their contributions and limitations as a developmental device.

Trustworthiness. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, a clear audit trail was maintained by both authors by keeping all documentation of the research process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized the importance of maintaining an audit-trail—documentation about the entire research process that describes procedures clearly enough for others to understand them, reconstruct them, and subject them to scrutiny.

Findings

A wide variety of research methodology is applied in HRD. Studies were classified according to traditional (experimental, quantitative), nontraditional (multiple methods, qualitative), conceptual/theoretical, review of the literature, or other (forums, journals). Table 2 shows the breakdown by type of methodology applied.

Table 2. AHRD Conference Proceedings Methodology, 1996–2000

Methodology	1996		1997		1998		1999		2000		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Traditional/experimental	38	30.89	40	32.00	43	34.68	61	38.36	49	33.56	231	34.12
Nontraditional	44	35.77	45	36.00	40	32.26	68	42.77	51	34.93	248	36.63
Conceptual/theoretical	29	23.58	24	19.20	24	19.35	26	16.35	32	21.92	135	19.94
Review of literature	6	4.88	11	8.80	10	8.06	2	1.26	12	8.22	41	6.06
Other	6	4.88	5	4.00	7	5.65	2	1.26	2	1.37	22	3.25
Total	123	100.00	125	100.00	124	100.00	159	100.00	146	100.00	677	100.00

There is a balance of both quantitative and qualitative research in HRD. There were many conceptual/theoretical papers as well. This corresponds with Hardy’s (1999) metastudy of HRD research. He suggests that emerging fields engage in a considerable amount of theory generation and qualitative research to form a theoretical foundation, and gradually shift toward quantitative studies to validate theory.

The analysis of research methodologies by gender was conducted by coding the gender of the reviewed papers’ first author. The results presented in Table 3 show that 62 percent of the 231 first authors using traditional/experimental research methodology are men, while 64 percent of the 248 first authors using nontraditional research methodology are women, thus more women are using nontraditional research methodologies than men. Sixty-three percent of the 135 conceptual/theoretical papers are written by men, and 37 percent by women. There is more balance in the gender distribution of the authors for literature reviews.

Table 4 shows the papers according to the Feminist Framework for Evaluating HRD Research. It examines how many papers met the six categories. Each of the categories was assessed against the total manuscripts by year and cumulatively for 1996–2000. Challenging traditional scientific inquiry is the most frequent category, with over 42 percent of the papers falling into this category over five years. The next most frequent category is recognizing gender as a category of analysis. Studies met this criterion over 10 percent of the time over five years. Far less frequent were the categories: (2) focuses on the experiences of women/diverse groups; (3) considers asymmetrical power arrangements; (5) attends to language and the power to name; and (6) advocates social activism and change. These occurred in 4–12 percent of the papers from 1996–2000.

Table 5 shows the results of the analysis of the papers in each of the six categories by the first author’s gender. Overall, a higher percentage of studies meeting any of the six categories were conducted by women. Only one of the

Table 3. AHRD Conference Proceedings Methodology by Gender, 1996–2000

<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>		<i>Research Group</i>		<i>Total n = 677</i>	
	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
Traditional/experimental	92	28.22	139	40.06	0	0.00	231	34.12
Nontraditional	160	49.08	84	24.21	4	100	248	36.63
Conceptual/theoretical	50	15.34	85	24.49	0	0.00	135	19.94
Review of literature	18	5.52	23	6.63	0	0.00	41	6.06
Other	6	1.84	16	4.61	0	0.00	22	3.25
Total	326	100.00	347	100.00	4	100.00	677	100.00

Table 4. AHRD Conference Proceedings According to Feminist Framework for Evaluating HRD Research, 1996–2000

Framework	1996 n = 117		1997 n = 120		1998 n = 117		1999 n = 157		2000 n = 144		Total n = 655	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
0. None of the categories	70	59.83	69	57.50	70	59.83	78	49.68	66	45.84	353	53.90
1. Challenges traditional scientific inquiry	48	41.03	48	40.00	45	38.46	70	44.59	69	47.92	280	42.75
2. Focuses on women's experiences and lives	10	8.55	6	4.92	3	2.56	11	7.01	11	7.69	41	6.26
3. Considers asymmetrical power arrangements	4	3.42	7	5.74	6	5.13	7	4.46	5	3.50	29	4.43
4. Recognizes gender/diversity as category of analysis	11	9.40	11	9.02	11	9.40	20	12.74	16	11.11	69	10.53
5. Attends to language and the power to name	8	6.84	7	5.74	6	5.13	7	4.46	7	4.90	35	5.34
6. Advocates social activism and change	5	4.27	13	10.83	7	5.98	9	5.73	18	12.59	52	7.94

Table 5. AHRD Conference Proceedings According to Feminist Framework for Evaluating HRD Research by Gender, 1996–2000

Framework	Females n = 320		Males n = 331		Research Group n = 4		Total n = 655	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
0. None of the categories	140	43.75	213	64.35	0	0.00	353	53.90
1. Challenges traditional scientific inquiry	171	53.44	105	31.72	4	100.00	280	42.75
2. Focuses on women's experiences and lives	35	10.94	6	1.81	0	0.00	41	6.26
3. Considers asymmetrical power relations	21	6.56	8	2.42	0	0.00	29	4.43
4. Recognizes gender/diversity as category of analysis	47	14.69	22	6.65	0	0.00	69	10.53
5. Attends to language and the power to name	27	8.44	8	2.42	0	0.00	35	5.34
6. Advocates social activism and change	33	10.31	19	5.74	0	0.00	52	7.94

ten papers meeting all six categories over the five years was written by a man, while all of the papers meeting five or four categories were written by women (see Table 6).

Table 7 summarizes the number of studies according to the number of categories that were present within a single study. There were few that met more than one category (usually the research category). Over half of the articles failed to meet any category whatsoever.

Discussion

This section revisits the Feminist Framework for Evaluating HRD Research and assesses the findings against it. It also makes some recommendations for future HRD research. The purpose of this inquiry was to address to what degree HRD research is using feminist inquiry and to identify some underaddressed dimensions for the field.

The first category of analysis was methodology. An erroneous assumption about feminist research is that it does not value quantitative methods. Although the feminist framework is focused on research models that challenge scientific

Table 6. Number of Categories Met, 1996–2000

Framework Categories	1996 n = 117		1997 n = 120		1998 n = 117		1999 n = 157		2000 n = 144		Total n = 655	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Meets all six categories	4	3.42	0	0	1	0.85	1	0.64	4	2.78	10	1.53
Meets five categories	0	0.00	3	2.50	0	0.00	3	1.91	0	0.00	6	0.92
Meets four categories	2	1.71	2	1.67	3	2.56	2	1.27	2	1.39	11	1.68
Meets three categories	2	1.71	5	4.17	3	2.56	6	3.82	5	3.47	21	3.21
Meets two categories	3	2.56	8	6.67	4	3.42	8	5.10	10	6.94	31	4.73
Meets one category	53	45.30	56	4.67	54	46.15	70	44.59	80	55.56	313	47.79
Meets no category	70	59.83	69	57.50	70	59.83	78	49.69	66	45.83	353	53.90

Table 7. Number of Categories Met, by Gender, 1996–2000

Framework Categories	Females n = 320		Males n = 331		Research Group n = 4		Total n = 655	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Meets all six categories	9	2.81	1	0.30	0	0.00	10	1.53
Meets five categories	6	1.86	0	0.00	0	0.00	6	0.92
Meets four categories	11	3.44	0	0.00	0	0.00	11	1.86
Meets three categories	13	4.06	8	2.42	0	0.00	21	3.21
Meets two categories	20	6.25	13	3.93	0	0.00	33	5.04
Meets one category	186	58.13	134	40.49	4	100.00	324	49.47
Meets no category	140	43.75	213	64.35	0	0.00	353	53.90

inquiry, experimental designs are considered to be feminist research if they meet the other criteria set forth by our framework and were thus considered for this analysis. DeVault (1996) implores researchers to avoid favoring one philosophical research stance over another and suggests that “feminists have made major contributions by finding concepts and practices that resist ‘dualisms’ and they urge resistance to the qualitative-quantitative division” (p. 31). Quoting Cannon, Higginbotham, and Laung, DeVault points out that small-scale projects may be more likely than quantitative studies to reproduce race and class biases of the discipline by including participants who are readily accessible to the researchers. She also advocates that “quantitative feminist work involves correcting gender and other cultural biases in standard procedure” (p. 31). Quantitative methods are customarily used in HRD research, and researchers would improve knowledge about race and gender by heeding DeVault’s advice. Qualitative research is also widely applied in HRD research; however, very few authors acknowledge their role as researcher or are forthcoming about their biases. We believe all types of research have value and encourage research that strives to eliminate bias, promote equity, reveal corrupt or harmful practices, and improve the standing of all employees.

Six percent of the papers over a period of five years dealt with women’s issues and even fewer addressed diversity. For instance, fewer than 0.5 percent of the papers dealt with issues of individuals possessing a double minority status, such as black women. We found no articles addressing how women have contributed to HRD history or that examine the multiple representations of women in society (they are not all white, middle class, and heterosexual).

We conclude that the questions relevant to working women and diverse groups, such as discrimination or job segregation, are not being adequately addressed in HRD research. This is startling considering that the American Society of Training and Development's (ASTD) 2002 *State of the Industry* report (VanBuren & Erskine, 2002) ranked diversity as the number-two trend affecting HRD in U.S. organizations, and considering that the workforce is becoming increasingly diverse (Fernandez, 1999) and organizations more global (Korten, 1995, 1998). What would be an adequate amount of feminist research in HRD? We are hesitant to offer a figure and suspect that individuals would differ widely on what is the "right" amount. Considering that diversity is one of the most significant workplace trends, we contend that 6 percent of the proceedings over five years is too little. We believe that, in a diversifying, globalizing workplace, HRD research should actively pursue these topics.

Understanding how power is wielded in HRD is not a priority according to our analysis finding that only 4 percent of the papers addressed asymmetrical power arrangements. We found this particularly stunning considering the impact that group and power dynamics has on all organizational activities, and we believe that addressing these issues would be beneficial for both HRD theory and practice.

We are encouraged that over 10 percent of the papers from 1996 to 2000 recognized gender as a category of analysis. What was surprising, however, was that many more studies report women in the sample but fail to include analysis based on gender. All participants are lumped into the same category and measured. It would be beneficial for the understanding of the issues studied to include in the analysis the gender and race/ethnic groups represented in the study sample. HRD research must move beyond merely counting women and diverse groups in the sample to actually analyzing the data according to these categories.

While HRD as a field often discusses "undiscussables" in the context of the learning organization, it has not progressed to addressing undiscussables related to gender and diversity in research. Five percent of the studies analyzed addressed language and naming. Perhaps we are caught in the fray of political correctness where the overt discussion of the dynamics and impact of racism and sexism cannot be stomached. This silence only contributes to a discourse that marginalizes women and diverse beings in an organizational context. HRD needs to delve into the "isms" that are not readily spoken about. HRD needs to address workplace discourse and how it silences, teaches, and oppresses humans.

Although HRD is a field committed to organizational change, there is little advocacy of change beyond the walls of the corporation. Our findings are telling in that only 8 percent of the papers analyzed advocated social activism and change. These findings indicate that the HRD field needs to further develop a social conscience. We realize that the space limitations of the proceedings papers may have inhibited thorough discussion of social issues,

but we were startled at the established pattern of overlooking it in study conceptualization, analysis, and discussion.

Limitations

We acknowledge that this analysis is imperfect. This study was not a critique of the theories and practices of HRD, but rather an analysis of research presented at the AHRD annual conferences. We recognize that research cannot be free from culture, history, or experience. We are committed to diversity and equity in both the workplace and the HRD field.

Feminist researchers acknowledge their positionality and the reality that researchers cannot be free of their race, gender, or socioeconomic status among other variables. To that end, both authors of this paper are white, able-bodied, heterosexual women. One of us is European and the other North American. Through our work in many different organizations and industries, we have different experiences with gender- and race/ethnicity-related issues. We have trained in both HRD and adult education.

Our work is not finished. We intend to continue analyzing HRD research according to this framework. Finally, our bias is that the HRD field would benefit from research that is more critical and inclusive methodologically and should strive to create knowledge that promotes social change and workplace equity.

Implications

This analysis of over 600 AHRD papers representing the most comprehensive, current HRD research to date discloses that there is a need in HRD for focusing on issues of equity and access in the workplace. Based on our analysis, we conclude that HRD is not generally conducting research that matches the criteria of a feminist framework and that the voices of women and other oppressed groups are not represented. This criteria includes challenging traditional inquiry procedures, focusing on research for (not about) women or other oppressed groups, considering asymmetrical power arrangements, recognizing gender (or diversity) as an essential category of analysis, attending to language and the power to “name,” and promoting social activism and change.

We are encouraged that HRD has some highly dedicated researchers who are creating knowledge that addresses the issues raised in the feminist research framework; however, we also recognize the need for studies that could lead to creating a more diverse, empowered workplace. Other than promoting alternative research designs and sometimes using women (or diversity) as a unit of analysis, HRD focuses little on issues of social justice in the workplace or larger social context. Women’s experiences as well as those of other diverse groups is ignored, as are asymmetrical power arrangements. Gender/race/ethnicity is not used as a category of analysis—even when data are collected by gender. Organizational “undiscussables” such as sexism, racism, patriarchy, and violence

receive little attention in the literature yet have considerable impact on organizational dynamics. Finally, HRD research has only weakly advocated change.

We have been challenged that this study might be offensive since “everyone has the academic freedom to study what she or he chooses.” We agree, and feel that we have exercised our *own* academic freedom in exposing this issue. While we are not advocating that readers run out and become feminists after reading this article, we offer our framework as a modest starting point for assessing how planned, ongoing, and completed studies address issues of opportunity and access for *all* employees.

What can HRD do in the future? We must be cognizant and critical of how HRD might reproduce existing power relationships in organizations. We need to ask “who benefits?” from our HRD practice and research. If it is only white males, we need to understand who is hurt by our actions and seek to correct the problem. We need to call on our professional associations, scholarly journals, and academic programs to address gender and equity issues as a more explicit part of their strategy and values.

Although there is a dearth of feminist research in HRD, this trend is not unique to HRD. Conduit and Hutchinson (1997) examined eight major public administration and policy journals to assess how many women were publishing, their patterns of publication, and the content of their research. They found that women are historically underrepresented in most, but more recently have been publishing at rates commensurate with their representation in the academy. They found a surprisingly small number of articles by women and men scholars that address traditional women’s policy concerns or apply a feminist perspective to the research. They conclude that public administration has yet to be significantly influenced by the research and theoretical contributions of the women’s movement found in the greater academic community. We concur with Conduit and Hutchinson’s (1997) conclusion that, “when it comes to the question of the emperor’s new clothes, the emperor still seems quite bare” (p. 194).

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