Editor's Notes

Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism is about examining and improving adult and continuing education practice within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) discourses. There is a pressing need for such a volume since people in many professional settings—schools, colleges and universities, businesses, corporations, social institutions, nonprofits, government units, and civil society and nongovernment organizations—wrestle with issues surrounding sexual minorities. A common goal of the chapters in this volume is to help professionals to better understand the lived experiences of LGBTQ people. Our hope is that readers will recognize the legitimacy of sexual minority concerns in learning across the life span. This volume is intended to capture the personal, social, and legal consequences that may result from avoiding issues of same-sex sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in professional environments. It will allow professionals to better respond to critical incidents of antigay behavior and construct social, public, and organizational policies to create inclusive and safe work and learning environments. These chapters detail the many ways that adult and continuing education and workforce training inform opinions and foster conversations for LGBTQ justice within organizations.

Chapters in this volume work together to weave a tapestry of many hues. In Chapter One, Robert J. Hill presents a synopsis of LGBTQ issues in adult and continuing education, and argues that organizations are key players in sexual minority discourses. The title of his chapter, "What's It Like to Be Queer Here?" is an inevitable question, given the pervasive nature of organizations on the landscape and the growing number of "out" sexual minorities that are a part of them. This chapter proceeds from the perspective of the LGBTQ organizational member, often a worker or volunteer in the public or private setting. It also looks specifically at the history of LGBTQ issues in adult and continuing education. Chapter Eight is the other bookend to the volume, bracketing a host of queer discussions from multiple perspectives. It proceeds from the vantage point of human resource managers.

Chapters Two and Three focus on development, that is, achieving improved well-being. Chapter Two, by Kathleen P. King and Susan C. Biro, explores sexual identity development. It presents a unique and dynamic LGBTQ transformative learning model that blends Mezirow's stages (1991) with a sexual orientation–sexual identity schema to create an interactive process of shifting and framing perspectives. Chapter Three, by Tonette S. Rocco and Suzanne J. Gallagher, examines career development. It asks, "How can we create nondiscriminatory—and queer—work environments

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for heterosexual and LGBTQ people?" It reminds us that this will require interventions at the individual, program, and advocacy levels.

Chapter Four, by Julie Gedro, teases out experiences of lesbians in organizational settings where double bias can be encountered. It is here that the confluence of gender and sexual orientation creates barriers to advancement. Gedro presents various development models and confronts organizational heterosexism and homophobia from the lens of lesbian discursive practice, a highly neglected frame in adult and continuing education.

Chapter Five, by André P. Grace and Kristopher Wells, and Chapter Six, by Thomas V. Bettinger, Rebecca Timmins, and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, direct readers specifically to educational settings. In Chapter Five, preservice and continuing teacher professional development are unpacked, and Chapter Six looks at higher education. In the latter, Bettinger and Timmins, both graduate students of adult education, self-report on their experiences as sexual minorities in academe; Tisdell, a faculty member, challenges readers to think about the fluid nature of one's sexual orientation and how that affects the classroom. Both chapters juxtapose "solutions" at the personal and the institutional level.

Chapter Seven, by Eunice Ellen Hornsby, is evolutionary in a number of respects. It picks up where several of the preceding chapters end, that is, how to use policy to drive organizational change, and it lays out the evolving nature and trends of law and policy. In a practical way, it offers a checklist for people engaged in policy development that will help to sensitize individuals to the discriminatory effects of ill-conceived policies. Hornsby offers some international perspectives, as does the work by Grace and Wells (largely in a Canadian context) in Chapter Five.

Chapter Eight, by Corey S. Muñoz and Kecia M. Thomas, is a lucid presentation of best practices for LGBTQ inclusion in organizations. Like Chapter Five, it presents strategies for navigating homophobia and heterosexism—the former in business settings and the latter in education. All four authors confront unsympathetic workplaces and offer insights into optimum ways to dampen hostility. Finally, Chapter Nine by Hill summarizes the issues by pulling together some common themes found in the volume.

In one way or another, all authors note the cultural war raging over sexual orientation and gender expression in society and the consequences that this has on individuals' lives, including life in organizational settings—and especially at work. It is a snapshot of a major issue that is complex, contested, resisted, and evolving.

Some Thoughts About Language

A brief detour into the language employed in this volume is in order. Language is not transparent; it does not simply communicate reality in an innocent or direct way that links a word to an object (see Lather, 1996). Language helps to construct, privilege, or marginalize. This, of course, makes prob-

lematic any definitions provided here. Labels not only describe; they inscribe people. Terms that may be considered problematic are used throughout this volume and include *gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, transidentified, transphobia, queer, homosexual, homophobia, heteronormative,* and several more. The following thoughts are offered in order to better understand the ways that authors employ (and deploy) some of these terms.

Homosexual and *homosexuality* are clinical words based in a psychologistic model and have limited capacity to describe the range of personal being and behaving. Ragins (2004), who presents comprehensible explanations of a number of sexual terms, reports that these "constructions are quite complex and are infused with social and political influences" (p. 37). Some of these influences emerge in this volume.

It is important from the outset to distinguish between *sexual orientation* and *gender identity.* Notions of sexual orientation (that is, mobilized sexual and affectional desires) have changed considerably over the past half-century. The binary *gay* (homosexual) and *straight* (heterosexual), with bisexuality the center point, is heavily contested and no longer seems adequate. "Sexual categories have become conceptually and ideologically suspect. . . . Lesbian, gay, and feminist theorists have repeatedly contested the essential, intrinsic, or universal character of sexual identities" (Hostetler and Herdt, 1998, p. 249). Situating gender and sexual categories as immutable, unimpeachable, timeless, and purely descriptive is an essentialist myth of epistemological theories of justification. Binaries limit our thinking about gender and sexual orientation; the notion of a unitary and coherent straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual subject may well be a fantasy. A much more elaborate analysis points to the fact that "same-sex" behavior may not lead to a "gay" self-identity and that there are vastly individual differences in the development of orientations and gender identities. The recent construction of African American men "on the down low" (or "dl," that is, engaging in veiled same-sex behavior while publicly presenting as heterosexual) is illustrative (see King, 2004). More nuanced discussions use the phrases *MSM* (men who have sex with men) and *WSW* (women who have sex with women) to describe sexual behavior, but self-identity in this typology remains unquestioned.

Gender identity is about personal feelings regarding one's sense of self about being a man or a woman (maleness and femaleness), apart from one's body parts. How a person presents these feelings to the world is considered her or his *gender expression.* These terms open the discussion to the topics of *transgender* and *transsexuality. Transgender* is a term that describes gender identity. People may have an identity—that is, man, woman, or both, or neither—that does not correspond to their actual genetic makeup and anatomy. *Transsexuality* is a state of being transgender but taking action to affirm the felt self-identity. Both transgender and transsexual people present unique circumstances, far beyond the question of which lavatory to use, that must be navigated in organizational environments.

In organizational settings, we find people in same-gender relationships who self-identify as straight; individuals who, while biologically appearing as male, self-identify as female (and vice versa); and individuals who consider themselves both or neither. All of this may result in considerable confusion, denial, fear, uncertainty, and discord in organizations. Heterosexism and homophobia may reflect this dissonance.

Heterosexism can be described as the attitude that all people are, or should be, heterosexual. It often is "an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, relationship, or community" (Herek, 1990, p. 316). *Homophobia,* the affective, irrational dislike of lesbians and gay men, has become a contested word, especially with the rise of the religious right in the United States. Once labeled as homophobic for their antigay, antilesbian sentiments, this group, having gained considerable public currency, openly rejects this marker. They perceive their negative attitudes toward sexual orientation as entirely rational and justifiable (Linneman, 2004). Herek (2004) advances the notion that a new vocabulary is needed and offers *sexual prejudice* (p. 6). Additional terms that have been suggested as replacements for the word *homophobia* include *homo-hatred, homo-aversion,* and *homo-negativity.* They are employed in these pages.

Intersexuals (people with a combination of male and female biology and physiology, sometimes incorrectly lumped together as hermaphrodites) are not directly addressed in this volume but should be at least mentioned here. Fausto-Sterling (2005) offers that intersex conditions (note the plural, "conditions") contribute to "challenging ideas about the male/female divide" (p. 116). The discourse constructed by people with intersex conditions is that the social problem associated with them is not gender related, but rather is stigma and trauma from society. No research studies on the intersection of intersexual issues and organizations, or the workplace, were found in a literature review for this volume. Informal and narrative presentations of the topic appear on the Internet and include "intersexual coming out" in the workplace and loss of employment after self-disclosure. (Readers are referred to the Intersex Society of North America for information on intersexual persons; http://www.isna.org/.)

Of course, the use of the term *queer* must be addressed head-on. It elicits passionate responses in many people. *Queer* is used in at least two distinct ways. One is as a means to avoid the cumbersome acronym LGBT, that is, as an umbrella term for the collection of sexual minorities. This usage of the word has value, including establishing an identifiable "we" (or "them") that generates political and personal identity. Another use of *queer* suggests that identities are always multiple, fluid, mobile, contingent, unstable (labile), and fragmented. It challenges fixed, sedimented notions such as gay, lesbian, and straight. *Queer* in this formation "attempts to transform an epithet into a label of pride and militance [sic]. . . . Use of the word is . . . debated within the gay community. Some argue that it reflects the internal-

ization of homophobic attitudes, while others argue that it signifies defiance of straight culture" (Rosenblum and Travis, 2003, p. 7). Even more vexing is the notion that *queer* must not be understood by the question, "What is it?" but rather by the interrogative, "How does it function?" An answer to the latter is that *queer* destabilizes and contests the meaning of "normal." This raises the possibility that there are straight queers too.

In this volume, readers will note the use of the term *sexual minority,* which is to some a problematic formation for at least two reasons. There is a debate, not engaged here, regarding whether LGBTQ people should be labeled with the term *sexual* since so much of our lives is not about sexuality. In addition, the use of *minority* implies a civil rights script, and the comparison of "gay rights" to "civil rights," especially in the context of African American struggles, remains contentious (Gates, 1999). Without engaging in these debates, the term *sexual minority* is employed here since it illustrates that a subset of the population experiences pervasive prejudice, social oppression, and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender expression (Chung, 2001).

A Critique

A valid criticism of the volume will be the partial (although by no means absent) coverage of intersectionality. Identity markers such as class, ability, ethnicity, and race overlap with sexual orientation and gender identity; that is, many people have multiple minority status. What it is like to be a gay, disabled, labor-class woman of color, for example, can only be conjectured. An exception includes the intersection of gender with sexual minority status, which is presented through specific coverage of lesbian issues.

Intersections from specific contexts could have been incorporated, but space disallowed it. Contemporary instances include LGBTQ issues and immigration and occupational settings; sports organizations; the military-industrial complex; sex worker industries; political organizations; religious organizations; legal and medical organizations; international organizations; and many more.

Another critique lies in the incomplete inclusion of bisexuals and gender-variant people—the BTQ in LGBTQ. Perhaps to some, the umbrella acronym LGBTQ will seem to be overused. Rarely do other sexualities get elaborated, such as *two-spirited* (a term employed by Native Americans and First Nation peoples, denoting that both masculine and feminine spirits live within some individuals, constituting a "third-gender" category), acknowledged in Chapter Five). We hope that readers will piece together the notion that there are more than two genders (the socially defined sex roles, values, and beliefs related to the state of being male or female) . . . , more than two gender expressions (what we do to communicate how we feel as male or female) . . . , and more than two sexual orientations (gay and straight). In fact, I hope that this volume challenges readers to question all of the bina-

ries that dominate and commandeer most of our lives. Doing so will open up new space for unheralded voices in arenas well beyond sexual minorities in organizational settings and perhaps will be the harbinger of a new social revolution.

Robert J. Hill
Editor

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