

## Research on the Work Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People: An Integrative Review of Methodology and Findings

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The methodology and content of nine published studies on the workplace experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are examined. Findings are integrated within five areas of common content: the pervasiveness of discrimination in the workplace, formal and informal types of discrimination, fear of discrimination, variability of workers in their openness about sexual orientation, and correlates of workers' degree of openness versus concealment of sexual orientation. The methodology employed in existing research is examined focusing specifically on sampling, data collection, and analyses and presentation of results. Recommendations for improving those aspects of methodology in future studies are made. Finally, ideas for expanding the scope of the content and methodology of research concerning the workplace experiences of this population are presented. © 1996 Academic Press, Inc.

With some exceptions, vocational and career literature focusing on lesbian, gay, and bisexual people did not begin to appear until the 1970s (Elliot, 1993), and only in the 1980s and 1990s has any substantial amount of literature emerged. Several articles reviewed and/or integrated lesbian and gay vocational behavior literature (Chung, 1995; Elliot, 1993; Fassinger, 1995; Morgan & Brown, 1991; Pope, 1995; Prince, 1995). All of these reviews took a broad focus and examined both empirical and nonempirical literature. In general, the broad scope of these reviews did not allow for the closer examination of important empirically focused questions and issues.

For this article, a literature search was conducted to locate empirical research published in the 1980s and 1990s in which the primary focus of the study was on the vocational behavior of lesbian, gay, or bisexual workers (i.e., studies that included only small amounts of attention to vocational concerns and studies that focused on organizations or legal issues were excluded). Nine of the 11 studies that were found focused on the work experiences of lesbian, gay, and/or bisexual people and are considered in this article. The

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other two studies that were found focused on the vocational interests or decisions of gay men (Chung & Harmon, 1994; Etringer, Hillerbrand, & Hetherington, 1990) and are reviewed by Chung (1995). The present integrative review is meant to stimulate research that (a) improves and expands on the limited range and strength of methodology used to date, and (b) builds upon the findings of existing research.

A brief overview of the sample, purpose, and general design of each of these nine studies is presented in Table 1 to serve as a reference for the reader. The studies in Table 1 are grouped by the general type of methodological framework employed: qualitative studies, studies that combine qualitative and quantitative methods (i.e., mixed design studies), and quantitative studies. The first section of this article draws broad conclusions about the work experiences of this population, which are supported across multiple studies. The second section examines sampling, data collection, and analysis and results in the nine studies and makes recommendations for improving those aspects of methodology. The final section advocates for the expansion of the methodology and content in research and provides some specific suggestions for studies to accomplish that expansion.

#### INTEGRATING FINDINGS: CONCLUSIONS SUPPORTED ACROSS STUDIES

Given only nine published studies in this area and the methodological limitations of those studies discussed in the second section of this article, it is legitimate to question whether any conclusions about the workplace experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people can be drawn. One approach to studies with weaker methodology is to evaluate as credible only findings with empirical support across differing studies. The general conclusions that follow do have support across multiple studies. The conclusions are broadly focused and tentatively stated to further take into account the limitations of the research. The conclusions are organized into five content areas concerning work experiences.

An important caveat in considering these conclusions concerns the segment of lesbian, gay, or bisexual workers to whom the conclusions may apply. As discussed more fully in the methodology section, the conclusions should be seen as applicable only to the limited range of participants that have been studied thus far (i.e., self-identified lesbian, gay, or bisexual workers, most of whom are white and formally very well educated). Applicability of these conclusions to other segments of lesbian, gay, and bisexual workers remains untested. Furthermore, only two of the nine studies reviewed included bisexual women and men in the sample. Thus, bisexual men and women are included selectively in the conclusions with inclusion occurring only if one or both of those two studies are part of the evidence that supports the conclusion. Even when bisexual men and women are included in the conclusion, the conclusion should be interpreted with caution because bisexual people constituted a small

TABLE 1  
Overview of Individual Studies on the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Workers

Author	Sample	Stated purpose	General design
		<i>Qualitative studies</i>	
Hall (1986)	13 lesbian women in corporations	Explore experiences and strategies to manage sexual identity	Phenomenological; an individual interview
Griffin (1992)	13 gay and lesbian teachers	Describe work experiences and "empower" participants (p. 167)	Participatory; individual & group sessions to collect data and empower
Woods & Harbeck (1992)	12 lesbian physical education teachers	Explore how participants "describe and make meaning of their work lives" (p. 144).	Phenomenological approach employing three individual interviews
		<i>Mixed (quantitative and qualitative) designs</i>	
Olson (1987)	97 lesbian and gay teachers	Study participants' "attitudes and perceptions" about experiences in schools (p. 75)	Written survey; both quantitative and qualitative self-report items
Croteau & Lark (1995)	174 lesbian, gay, or bisexual student-affairs educators	"Provide the first descriptive information" about the work experiences of this group (p. 189)	Written survey; quantitative self-report items; one qualitative item about experiences of discrimination
Croteau & von Destinon (1994)	249 lesbian, gay, or bisexual student-affairs educators	"Obtain information . . . about their experiences during job searches" (p. 40)	Written survey; quantitative self-report items; one qualitative item about experiences of discrimination.
		<i>Quantitative studies</i>	
Levine & Leonard (1984)	203 lesbians in various occupations	"Explore . . . factors affecting employment discrimination against lesbians" (p. 704)	Written survey; quantitative self-report items; some items requiring descriptions
Schachar & Gilbert (1983)	79 lesbians in various occupations	Examined "areas of interrole and intrarole conflict" and factors influencing coping with conflict (p. 244)	Written survey with various forms of measurement to test hypotheses about role conflict.
Schneider (1986)	228 lesbians in various occupations	"Explores the relationship among workplace determinants, coworker sociability, and disclosure of sexual identity" (p. 463)	Written survey with various forms of measurement for multiple variables to test a structural equation model.

proportion of participants even in those two studies. Some caution also is warranted about the degree to which conclusions apply to gay men as well as to lesbian women because although all nine studies included lesbian women, only four studies included gay men. Thus any conclusion's application to gay men is generally supported by fewer studies than is the conclusion's application to lesbian women.

### Pervasiveness of Discrimination in the Workplace

From the reports of lesbian, gay, and bisexual workers, it appears that discrimination is pervasive in the workplace experiences of this population. Negative actions toward these workers due to their sexual orientation, often labeled as discrimination by participants and researchers, were a central feature of participants' self-reported experiences in virtually all of these empirical studies. Three of the studies asked participants directly if they had ever been discriminated against in employment (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Levine & Leonard, 1984) and found that from 25–66% of participants reported discrimination. Other estimates of job discrimination from sources that did not meet the criteria for inclusion in this review (e.g., unpublished studies, or studies not focused on vocational issues) are summarized by several authors (Levine, 1979; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Morgan & Brown, 1991) and appear to be consistent with the aforementioned estimates. Three of the studies reported even higher percentages of respondents who reported discrimination for workers who were more, rather than less, open about their sexual identity at work (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Levine & Leonard, 1984). Furthermore, all three qualitative studies that inquired about work experiences in an open-ended manner (Griffin, 1992; Hall, 1986; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) found that participants either experienced or anticipated experiencing discrimination because of their sexual orientation. "True" estimates of discrimination cannot be assessed from the data due to the unverified self-report nature of the measurement and due to the sampling problems discussed in the next section on methodology. Nevertheless, the data do establish that discrimination is experienced as pervasive by lesbian, gay, and bisexual workers.

### Formal and Informal Discrimination

Discrimination against lesbian, gay, and bisexual workers seems to involve a wide range of actions that can be classified as formal and informal. Qualitative descriptions of actual and anticipated discrimination were found in all six of the qualitative studies and in the illustrations of quantitative data in the study by Levine and Leonard (1984). Levine and Leonard (1984) made a distinction between "formal" and "informal" discrimination in the workplace, and this distinction also fits the data from the other studies. Formal discrimination was defined as "institutionalized procedures to restrict officially conferred work rewards" (p. 706). In the stories of participants from

the qualitative studies, formal discrimination most often involved employer decisions to fire or not hire someone due to their sexual orientation. Other formal discriminatory actions described by participants included being passed over for promotions, raises, or increased job responsibilities. Participant comments about policies that excluded same-sex partners from employment benefits (e.g., insurance, family leave) could also be classified as formal discrimination. Informal discrimination as described in these studies included "harassment and other unofficial actions taken by supervisors or co-workers" (p. 706). Participants' descriptions of informal discrimination included examples of verbal harassment and property violence. Reports of loss of credibility, acceptance, or respect by co-workers and supervisors based on a worker's sexual orientation also could be classified as informal discrimination. The graphic stories of formal and informal discrimination described in this research give a sense of the quality and range of adverse or discriminatory practices faced by these workers.

### Fear of Discrimination

Fear or anticipation of discrimination also seems pervasive and is often reported to be an important consideration in how workers manage their lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities at work. Levine and Leonard (1984) found that over 60% of lesbian workers in various occupations anticipated discrimination at work if their sexual orientation became known. Croteau and Lark (1995) found that 44% of lesbian, gay, or bisexual college student-affairs professionals anticipated job discrimination in the future. Fear of discrimination, especially if sexual orientation is disclosed or discovered, is a primary feature of the subjective accounts of participants' experiences at work. Participants largely assumed that discrimination would occur if or when their sexual orientation was discovered. The fear or anticipation of discrimination, in fact, seemed to be the major factor in workers hiding lesbian, gay, or bisexual identities as described in the next section.

### Variability in Workplace Openness about Sexual Orientation

The degree of concealment or openness regarding a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity at work was a major focus of all nine studies and seems to vary widely across workers. Schneider's (1986) sample of 228 lesbian workers across a range of occupations varied considerably on this dimension: 29% reported being not open at all, 32% somewhat open, 23% mostly open, and 16% totally open. Levine and Leonard (1984) reported that among 203 lesbians in various occupations, 23% reported all or most people at work knew they were lesbian, 29% reported some knew, 21% reported only close friends knew, and 27% reported no one at work knew. The 174 college student affairs professionals in Croteau and Lark's (1995) study were considerably more open: 47% reported all or most people at work knew their sexual orientation, 32% reported some knew, 15% reported only close friends knew, and 6%

reported no one knew. Finally, Croteau and von Destinon (1994) found that 38% of their sample of 249 college student-affairs professionals disclosed their sexual orientation to their prospective employers during the job search, whereas the remainder waited until after a job offer to disclose, if at all. In the three purely qualitative studies that had small samples (Griffin, 1992; Hall, 1986; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), very few, if any, of the gay and lesbian school teachers, lesbian physical education teachers, or lesbian women in corporate settings were publicly open in the workplace about their sexual orientation. Taken together all of these findings indicate great variability in openness of workers about their sexual identity.

The three qualitative studies in this area indicate that such variation can be described along a concealment versus openness continuum and gave detailed descriptions of the strategies employed by lesbian and gay workers at various points along that continuum. Hall (1986) and Woods and Harbeck (1992) offered compelling descriptions and several unique perspectives on identity management. Griffin (1992) described the most comprehensive and systematic model, however, and it was consistent with the experiences of the participants in the other studies as well. Four main categories of strategies were identified along the continuum in her model. Passing strategies were located at the most closeted end of the continuum and involved lying in order to be seen as heterosexual. Covering strategies were at a somewhat less closeted end of the continuum and involved censoring so that participants were not seen as lesbian or gay. The third set of strategies involved being implicitly out and were located more toward the publicly out end of the continuum. In these strategies, participants told the truth without using explicit language that indicated one's minority sexual orientation. Thus, co-workers were allowed to see the participant as gay or lesbian if they so wished. The final set of strategies involved being explicitly out and were located at the publicly out end of the continuum. In these strategies, participants outwardly affirmed their lesbian or gay identity and encouraged others to see them as lesbian or gay.

Participants' experience of strategies at the more closeted end of the continuum was dominated by the fear of being accused of being lesbian or gay. Strategies at this end of the continuum necessitated at least some degree of separation between the professional and personal aspects of the self. Participants' experience of strategies at the more open end of the continuum was dominated more by self-integrity and less by fear. Strategies at this end of the continuum involved more integration between personal and professional aspects of the self.

### Correlates of the Degree of Openness vs. Concealment

Few factors related to the degree of openness versus concealment of sexual orientation in the workplace have been investigated across multiple studies. There is limited quantitative evidence that greater openness about sexual identity at work may be associated with increased experience of discrimination. Two studies

(Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & von Destinon, 1994) found that among college student-affairs professionals greater frequency of discrimination was reported by those who were more open as opposed to those who were less open about their sexual identity. Levine and Leonard (1984) found the same relation in a sample of lesbian workers in New York City. On the other hand, two studies (Levine & Leonard, 1984; Croteau & Lark, 1995) indicated that those who are more open are more satisfied with that degree of openness than are those who are less open. No other factors related to disclosure or concealment were examined in more than a single study.

## METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW

Three aspects of the methodology of these studies are discussed below: sampling, data collection, and analysis and results. Within each aspect, the methodological practices followed in the published research are discussed first, followed by recommendations for future research. Some of the methodological considerations pertaining to qualitative research are explained more extensively because readers may be less familiar with those methods.

### *Sampling*

*Published research.* Several authors discuss sampling methods that are commonly used in quantitative research on lesbian and gay issues and the problems associated with those methods (e.g., Herek & Berrill, 1990a, 1990b; Herek, Kimmel, Amaro, & Melton, 1991). Lonborg and Phillips (1996) extend this discussion to vocational research. A central issue in sampling with this population has involved the consistent use of convenience sampling rather than any type of probability sampling. The nine studies reviewed here all used convenience sampling. Because the aforementioned authors discuss the issues involved in convenience versus probability sampling with this population, the following discussion is relatively brief and focused on the restrictive nature of samples in the nine studies reviewed.

It is apparent that the variety of lesbian, gay, and bisexual workers that participated in the nine studies was restricted in a number of ways. All participants in these studies were self-identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual and/or were connected with lesbian, gay, or bisexual communities. The vast majority of participants in these studies were white and most had a considerable amount of formal education. The purpose of quantitative portions of the studies was largely descriptive with a few attempting to verify some hypothesized relations between variables. Neither the descriptive information nor the relations found between variables in these studies should be interpreted as applicable to the full range of lesbian, gay, and bisexual workers. At best, the studies may be representative of the segment of such workers who are white, formally well educated, and self-identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Due to the lack of probability sampling, caution must be taken in generalizing descriptive information to, or making inferences about, even this restricted

portion of lesbian, gay, or bisexual workers. Unfortunately, limitations to the representativeness of samples are discussed in only three of the six studies that contain quantitative elements (Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Schneider, 1986; Schachar & Gilbert, 1983).

The use of a narrow range of participants in a *single* qualitative study is *not* problematic because generalizing to a population is not the purpose of such research. Instead, the purpose of the qualitative study in this area has been to discover information about the work lives of this population through analysis of participants' detailed descriptions of their experiences. The exclusive use of similarly restricted samples *across* qualitative studies is problematic, however, in that such phenomenological information is available about only a limited range of workers in this population.

The recruitment procedures used in the nine studies reviewed involved three basic strategies. One strategy consisted of using personal contacts of the researchers or of other participants, often described as "friendship networks" or "snowballing" procedures. A second strategy consisted of recruiting at, or through, organizations, newsletters, businesses, or social events of lesbian, gay, or bisexual communities. The final strategy, specific to vocational research, involved recruitment from work-related organizations that specifically address lesbian, gay, or bisexual issues within a particular field. This last strategy seemed quite effective in providing access to this population but is limited to the occupations that have such organizations.

All the quantitative and mixed design studies provided information on survey return rates, except the one in which the study itself was only part of a larger article (Levine & Leonard, 1984). Two of the five studies that reported this information had fairly low return rates of 30% or under (Olson, 1987; Shachar & Gilbert, 1983). These studies simply mailed their surveys to individuals or organizations apparently without any follow-up or other method for encouraging participation. The other three studies (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Schneider, 1986) had return rates of 66%, 79%, and 81% respectively. The special procedures for participant recruitment followed in these studies may have been responsible and are worth reviewing. Schneider (1986), who used a snowballing method, had the participants write handwritten notes to the people they had suggested for participation. Croteau and Lark (1995) included hot pink "Advocate for Awareness" stickers with their mailed surveys and sent two follow-ups. Croteau and von Destinon (1994) distributed their surveys at lesbian, gay, or bisexual events and programs at two national professional conferences. They constructed the survey in a brief format to fit on a large index card so that participants could complete the survey immediately upon receipt.

*Recommendations.* The main aspect of sampling that needs to be improved concerns the lack of diversity and representativeness found in all the samples thus far employed. Researchers who seek to generalize descriptive or inferential data from a single study to all lesbian, gay, or bisexual workers must use

probability sampling methods (Herek et al., 1991). All researchers should consider attempts to target more diverse workers. Herek and his colleagues note that “the negative effects of sampling by convenience can be offset to a limited extent by using of variety of recruitment strategies and by targeting diverse sections of the community” (Herek et al., 1991, p. 959). The variety of recruitment strategies used in the nine studies reviewed here is an excellent starting place in planning recruitment strategies, but researchers should also generate and use new strategies. For instance, targeting organizations for lesbian, gays, and/or bisexuals of color might diversify the racial composition of samples.

One approach to studying underresearched segments of lesbian, gay, or bisexual workers is the basic design used in the qualitative studies reviewed in this article (i.e., collecting in-depth phenomenological data from a small number of participants). For instance, Loiacano (1989) studied the dual racial and sexual oppression faced by gay and lesbian African Americans. A similarly designed study could examine the work experiences of this group related to both their racial and sexual identities and provide the first vocational information about this segment of lesbian, gay, or bisexual workers.

Despite the foregoing recommendations, I emphasize that even the most studied segment of lesbian, gay, and bisexual workers (i.e., white, well-educated lesbian women who work in education) is a vastly understudied group. Research with more diverse samples is needed and should be a research priority, but much more research is also needed with the segments of this population thus far studied.

### *Data Collection*

*Published research.* All the qualitative data in the nine studies were collected through either interviewing or written responses to open-ended questions on surveys. Only Griffin (1992) employed multiple methods of data collection, including individual and group interviews as well as observations of the participants when they were interacting with one another in groups for the purpose of “empowerment.” No qualitative fieldwork methods were used (i.e., no observational methods in actual or analogue work settings). In the studies using qualitative interview techniques, little or no information was provided on the content or process of the interviews. No interview schedules or guides were given. All the mixed design studies involved using written narrative responses to open-ended questions.

All quantitative measurement involved paper-and-pencil self-reports. Four of the studies (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Olson, 1987) used single-item self-report measures, many of which measured broadly conceived variables such as discrimination. These items were supported only by face validity and often appeared to be written and used uniquely for each study. Shachar and Gilbert (1983) and

Schneider (1986) did use either established scales and/or multiple items to measure a few variables.

*Recommendations.* Quantitative researchers should not use single-item measures of constructs such as discrimination and openness regarding sexual orientation. Such items have questionable reliability and no established validity. One problem with the validity of such items is that they contain words (e.g., discrimination, openness) that various participants may interpret differently (Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Etringer et al., 1990). Three variables have been particularly important in previous research: discrimination, the degree of openness about a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity, and specific strategies for concealment or openness. Possibilities for improved measurement are illustrated by examples concerning these three variables.

One possibility for addressing some of the problems in the measurement of discrimination may lie in increasing the number of items used in measurement and focusing each item on a specific discriminatory action. A model for this type of measurement can be found in the antigay and lesbian violence and victimization research (see Herek, 1989; Berrill, 1990). In this research, items describing specific actions are listed and participants report whether they have experienced that action directed at them on the basis of their sexual orientation. A consistent list of items has now emerged in this body of research making possible the accumulation of comparable information on the occurrence of antigay and lesbian violence and harassment. The qualitative data that described formal and informal discriminatory actions faced by workers in the studies reviewed here could be used in generating items that address specific discriminatory actions in the work setting. Cumulative scoring across items would provide greater reliability of measurement for the global concept of discrimination.

The degree of concealment versus openness concerning the worker's sexual identity is a variable with measurement issues similar to those concerning discrimination. One development is that the same 4-point Likert scale has been used in two studies to measure concealment versus openness (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Levine & Leonard, 1984). I recommend more consistency in the measurement of this and other variables to increase the comparability of research findings across investigations. Schneider (1986) asked about concealment versus disclosure using two items that differed in format and content. I further recommend the use of such items in future research and a development of a method of scoring these items cumulatively to provide multiple item measurement of openness versus concealment.

Finally, improved quantitative measures of the type of strategy workers use in concealing or disclosing sexual identity are needed. Descriptive information about these strategies, grounded in the experiences of workers, are provided in several qualitative studies (Griffin, 1992; Hall, 1986; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). This information can be the basis for generating scale items to begin the development of a quantitative measure of identity management strategies in the workplace.

Data collection methods used in the qualitative portions of studies also have been limited and must be improved in future research. The qualitative methods used heretofore rely almost exclusively on interviewing or written essay data-collection methods. These methods should be supplemented by direct or indirect observational methods in "natural" settings (i.e., work or simulated work environments). For instance, one method that could be used is to have participants tape-record or write notes about each experience during a work day in which they were forced to make some choice about how to manage their sexual identity. Convergence among multiple methods of data collection is widely accepted as one form of evidence of validity, a necessary consideration in sound qualitative design. For example, the recording of daily notes could be coupled with in-depth interviews to provide data from two slightly different perspectives. Regardless of the qualitative data collection methods, those methods must be explicitly described in detail (e.g., provide verbatim questions from written surveys, list specific questions asked and the process followed during interviews).

### *Data Analysis and Results*

*Published research.* Descriptive statistics were the primary focus in four of the studies containing quantitative data (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Olson, 1987), although some of these studies did test a few statistical relations between variables. Shachar and Gilbert (1983) and Schneider (1986) focused more on testing hypotheses, with the former using simple *t*-tests and the latter structural equation modeling. With the exception of the Levine and Leonard (1984) study, the analysis and results of the quantitative elements in studies were clearly explained.

The standardization of quantitative statistical procedures allows the researcher to simply state the procedure used and the reader can critically evaluate that procedure. Such standardization of terminology is not the case when using qualitative methods, so detailed description of procedures and techniques of analysis are necessary. Olson (1987) and Woods and Harbeck (1992) provided no description of their qualitative analysis process. The other four studies with qualitative elements provided some detail. Griffin (1992) provided the most information about the analysis of qualitative interview data. One researcher initially identified the themes that emerged from the data, then a second researcher checked the themes to "confirm the grounding of the analysis in the interview data" (p. 172.) Then the initial themes developed by the researchers were presented to the participants and their feedback was incorporated into the analysis to derive the final themes. Croteau and von Destinon (1994) provided the most information about the analysis of qualitative written data, describing the steps involved in the analysis and the intent of each step.

A key criterion for evaluating a qualitative study is the extent to which the reader is able to understand the experiences of the participants through the

researchers' presentation of results. From this author's perspective, all six of the studies describing qualitative data seemed to effectively put the reader "into the shoes" of participants. General experiences were clearly explained and illustrated with the specific stories of participants including direct quotations. However, the organization of the results varied. Hall (1986) simply provided a commentary without an explicit organizational structure. Olson (1987) briefly summarized participant responses to each question separately. The other four studies (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Griffin, 1992; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) provided an organizational framework for the participants' experiences that emerged from the data during analysis. These studies identified general themes or categories and then systematically presented participant experiences within each theme or category.

*Recommendations.* The main aspect of quantitative analyses needing improvement is the examination of complex relations among variables. Schneider's (1986) use of structural equation modeling to examine multiple variables related to disclosure of identity at work by lesbian women illustrates such an approach to quantitative data analysis. The literature already indicates the possibility of complex relations among multiple variables that need to be tested through multivariate methods. For instance, three existing studies (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Levine & Leonard, 1984) indicate that in contrast to workers who are not very open about their sexual orientation, those workers who are more open report both more discrimination and more satisfaction with their choice about how open to be. Multivariate analyses are needed to consider direct or indirect relations among these and possible moderating variables.

The data analysis process followed in qualitative studies must be spelled out in sufficient detail so that readers can critically evaluate the analysis (e.g., how systematic was the process? What checks were made for the accuracy of the results in capturing the experience of participants?). Furthermore, qualitative research results should clearly depict the experiences of the participants and ideally should be presented within an organizational scheme that arises out of the participants' experiences.

### *Expanding the Scope of Research on the Workplace Experiences of this Population*

The current research is limited in both content and methodology. The previous section outlines some ways in which specific aspects of the methodology can be improved. This section focuses more broadly on expanding the variety of quantitative and qualitative designs employed and the content examined by those designs.

All quantitative approaches have used written survey methods to collect data on existing variables (i.e., all studies have been survey or correlational in nature with no manipulation of variables. Further, no studies have been conducted at work sites or in simulated work situations (i.e., no field or

analogue studies). Finally, there have been no quantitative evaluation studies to test empirically the effectiveness of interventions designed to assist lesbian, gay, or bisexual workers in dealing with work-related issues concerning their sexual orientation. Griffin's (1992) qualitative study suggests one possibility of a quantitative intervention study, and it illustrates another way to coordinate qualitative and quantitative methods to generate knowledge. Griffin's qualitative participatory study was designed not only to study the experiences of gay and lesbian teacher participants but also to empower the participants in dealing with issues in the workplace related to their sexual identity. Griffin detailed each element in the participatory process and then described participants' reactions to, and self-perceived changes as a result of, the process. On the basis of such information her process now can be refined and packaged as an intervention that can be evaluated in a quantitative design that allows inferences to be made about effectiveness.

Even within survey and correlational quantitative designs, the variety of approaches has been quite limited with much attention to descriptive data and little attention to hypothesis testing and theory-based research. A focus on descriptive or exploratory research may be appropriate and needed when first investigating a previously ignored population (Phillips, Strohmer, Bethaume, & O'Leary, 1983) for whom constructs developed on majority populations may not apply (Sang, 1989). Investigators need, however, to move beyond description. In this regard, the work of Schachar and Gilbert (1983) warrants further consideration as an example of a potential direction for future research. Their study was designed using models of interrole and intrarole conflict to generate hypotheses regarding how lesbian women cope with conflicts within and between work and relationship roles. Future studies should continue to look to such social psychological theories and models for guidance in research on the vocational behavior of this population. Furthermore, general vocational theory should be considered for its application to understanding and studying this population as discussed by several contributors to this issue (see Dunkle, 1996; Fassinger, 1996; Mobley & Slaney, 1996; Morrow, Gore, & Campbell, 1996). Another source of theory to guide research in this area is the larger emerging field of lesbian and gay psychology (e.g., Greene & Herek, 1994). For instance, sexual identity development theory (H. Levine & Evans, 1991) and the concept of internalized homophobia (Shidlo, 1994) may prove to be relevant in understanding the work experiences of this population.

I recommend the continued use of qualitative methods in this area and that a greater variety of qualitative designs should be considered. Qualitative methodology is only now gaining acceptance as a method for research in many of the disciplines involved in the study of vocational behavior, but two-thirds of the studies reviewed here used qualitative methods to some extent. There are two reasons for the frequent use of these methods. First, exploratory work is crucial in a relatively new area of research, because a body of descriptive information about the phenomenon being studied must be generated

before researchers can identify key variables and develop measures suitable for use in quantitative research. Qualitative approaches, with their emphases on open-ended inquiry and discovery, are ideal for generating such new information. Second, open-ended inquiry and discovery allow concepts and models to emerge from the unique experiences and perspectives of the socially marginalized group. This allows for the possibility that concepts and models will differ from the existing concepts and theories that often reflect the values and concerns of the majority or dominant social groups (Sang, 1989).

## CONCLUSION

Empirical investigation of the work experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people has just begun. At present, the published literature is limited in scope and methodological rigor. Nevertheless, the nine studies reviewed here have set the stage for continued and improved efforts in this area. This review and integration of methodology and findings is meant to stimulate future research endeavors that are grounded in the pioneering work explored herein and that expand and improve the methodology and content thus far examined.

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