Collecting Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data in an Educational Context
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Agenda

- Introduction and disclaimers
- Definitions and level setting
- Collecting SOGI data for Education
- Review of “best practices” documents
- ApplyUC case study
- Conclusions
The findings, conclusions and opinions in this presentation are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views or policy of The Regents of University of California nor the UC Office of the President.
People are complicated. Gender and sexuality are complicated. The language around gender and sexuality is changing.

I often notice when I give presentations around gender and sexuality, especially in groups that skew heterosexual and cisgender, that the room can be very quiet. People will often won’t ask a question because they think they won’t use the right words and that they will hurt feelings.

We are all here today to learn. I don’t think anyone is in this room because they are looking to be offensive or hurtful. So my ask is that we all extend a little bit of grace to each other and offer the benefit of the doubt. If you have a question, but you aren’t sure exactly what the right words are, ask your good question badly, and if we need to explore new language or challenge assumptions, that’s another opportunity for us to learn.
Be kind!

Take chances, make mistakes, get messy!
Disclaimer: I’m mainly focusing on western/European conceptions of gender identity and sexual orientation. Other cultures have norms and gender roles that don’t fit neatly into the terms and labels presented here.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are not one thing; they are constructed from a variety of interrelated identities. Sexual orientation: attraction (physical/emotional-romantic), behavior, identification
Gender identity: Sex or gender assigned at birth, identity, gender(ed) expression

- Gender identity
- Gender expression (mention pronouns)
- Sex assigned at birth (discuss intersex identities)

Sexual Orientation
- Physical/Emotional Attraction
- Identity(s)
- Behavior (give example of MSM/WSW; generally not of interest for educational contexts)

NB: These can all move independently.

Combination of different characteristics:
- My personal mapping
- Trans or transgender- umbrella of identities (mention agender/bigender/twospirit)
- Heterosexual
- Gay/Lesbian/Homosexual
- Bisexual/Pansexual (mention bisexual erasure)
- Asexual/Aromantic

Categorization can be time or context dependent (e.g. Drag Queens/Kings, gender fluidity, presentation at work vs. social, etc.)

These are all representative, not definitional. If someone tells you they’re bisexual, trans or any other identity, it’s generally best to take them at their word. They know what that identity means to them.

The Gender Unicorn is from Trans Student Education Resources: http://www.transstudent.org/gender/
Discuss the “behavior” portion of this in an educational context.

What are we actually asking about? Do we want to know identity/behavior all of the above?

Note on IPEDS reporting: They require that reports be made within the gender binary (male/female) and do not allow for “unknown” or “other.” There is not, however, any guidance on the underlying construct that the reporting should be based on. That is, USED does not specify if reporting should be based on gender identity, gender assigned at birth, or some other construct. See: https://edsurveys.rti.org/IPEDS_TRP_DOCS/prod/documents/TRPS1_Summary.pdf
Best Practices Documents

- "One question approach"
- Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals
- National Survey of Student Engagement
- The Williams Institute (UCLA School of Law)
The “One question approach”

- “Do you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning (GLBTQ)?”
- or
- “Do you identify as a part of the LGBTQ community?”

Used by some universities on admissions or enrollment forms:
- Northeastern Illinois University
- The Ohio State University
- University of Iowa

No documentation around why this is a best practice, but it is something that is being done.

At each slide, discuss which of the 5 reasons for data collection this question might address.
SGL is an Afrocentric alternative to gay and bisexual identities that center whiteness and white experiences of queerness.

This fulfills the direct service provision and virtue signaling.

Why don’t we give all the options and then “roll up”?

Confusion among respondents about terms. If even a small number of people mistakenly select an identity that does not match their own, it can swamp respondents who do actually identify with a smaller group.

An analyst has to make decisions rules about how to “roll up” identities. This may not reflect people’s identities or experiences.

Example of problematic rollup: SGL → gay
Not mentioned on the last slide: what do we do with blanks? If someone gives us a specific identity, do we actually plan on using that data? How? (We’ll look at this in a moment)
The Williams Institute

Do you consider yourself to be:
(singl select)
- Heterosexual or straight;
- Gay or lesbian;
- Bisexual?

Assigned sex at birth
What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?
- Male
- Female

Current gender identity
How do you describe yourself? (check one)
- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Do not identify as female, male or transgender
The Williams Institute – variant

Do you consider yourself to be:
(single select)
- Heterosexual or straight;
- Gay or lesbian;
- Bisexual?

Assigned sex at birth
What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?
- Male
- Female

Current Gender Identity
How do you describe yourself? (check one)
- Male
- Female
- Trans male/Trans man
- Trans female/Trans woman
- Genderqueer/gender non-conforming
- Different identity (please state): __________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting</th>
<th>Needs Assessment</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Direct Service Provision</th>
<th>Virtue Signaling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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Other important considerations

- Placing of questions (Williams Institute):
  - Place questions with other demographic data or in a separate section. Do not place question near questions about sexual assault or sexual abuse.

- Be explicit about data use (Consortium):
  - How the data will be used
  - Which offices or individuals will have access to the data
  - That the information will not affect admissions, enrollment, academic status, etc.
  - Be clear with campus partners about how and when data can be used (Van Matre)

- Tell students how they can change their selections in the future (Consortium)

- Have an action plan for responses that indicate that a student/applicant is troubled or emotionally distressed. (Allen and Trimble 1993)
Privacy concerns for minors

• “To prevent accidental disclosure of a student’s transgender status, it is strongly recommended that schools keep records that reflect a transgender student’s birth name and assigned sex (e.g., copy of the birth certificate) apart from the student’s school records.”
• “Pursuant to the above protections, schools must consult with a transgender student to determine who can or will be informed of the student’s transgender status, if anyone, including the student’s family. With rare exceptions, schools are required to respect the limitations that a student places on the disclosure of their transgender status, including not sharing that information with the student’s parents. In those very rare circumstances where a school believes there is a specific and compelling “need to know,” the school should inform the student that the school intends to disclose the student’s transgender status, giving the student the opportunity to make that disclosure her or himself.”
  — California Department of Education

School Success and Opportunity Act (Assembly Bill 1200) Frequently Asked Questions

Source: https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/di/eo/faqs.asp
ApplyUC is the central application system for undergraduate admissions to all 9 UC undergraduate campuses. There are over 200,000 unique applicants each year.
### ApplyUC SOGI questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>UC Registrations*</th>
<th>YouGov**</th>
<th>PPRI***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay/Lesbian</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Provided</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans</td>
<td>.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All first-time registered students from fall 2016 and 2017  
** YouGov poll from August 2015, nationally representative sample, ages 18-29, n = 182  
*** Jones and Cox 2015 (Public Religion Research Institute), ages 18-35, n = 2314

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YouGov Polling Report:  

PPRI Study:  
What does this tell us?

American Institute of Bisexuality (an advocacy organization) would say bisexuality and pansexuality are synonyms. Academic research hasn’t come to consensus about how these terms are used*. But in popular culture, there is a distinction made: Articles in the Business Insider, the independent, you tube writ large, draw the distinction
And importantly, if we added all the pansexual-spectrum people into bisexual, we would increase that group by ~10%.

Asexual and asexual spectrum identities are totally left off. We don’t have any way of understanding these student’s experiences is they don’t explicitly tell us.

There is confusion. Under sexual orientation, hundreds of people put their gender identity under sexual orientation (and several said things like “normal”).

This is useful data for moving forward. Use what you learn in order to make improvements... and then publish what you are doing.

Conclusions

- Best practices are still being developed in all fields, including education

- Be intentional about why you collect SOGI data. Let your collection purpose guide item construction.

- Be clear with students/applicants about how data will be used.

- Use data to improve your SOGI data collection items (specific to your purpose).
How to move forward at your school/campus

- Identify and communicate with stakeholders
- Identify and communicate purpose(s) of data collection
- Create a data collection/use policy
  - Collection
    - Specify wording of question(s)
    - Determine when and where data is collected
    - Communicate how data can be changed
  - Data storage
  - Data use/disclosure
  - Data retention/destruction
Thank you

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Discussion

• How do you handle stakeholder engagement?
  – Admissions/Registrars
  – Administration
  – LGBT Support Offices
  – Student Groups
  – Parents?
(re)Sources

- Williams Institute Documents
- List of questions that colleges and universities ask on application or registration documents: