



2019 Assessment Institute

Collecting Data on LGBTQ+ Communities: A Campus-Wide Imperative

Andrew J. Young, Robbie Janik, & Caleb J. Keith

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INTENDED LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize challenges associated with collecting data about LGBTQ+ populations
2. Generate potential strategies to address challenges associated with collecting data about LGBTQ+ populations
3. Determine potential sources for data related to LGBTQ+ populations, even if not explicitly asked or systematically collected by their respective institutions



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Compelling Reasons to Collect Data

1. Help identify and monitor progress toward reducing disparities
2. Better know (and serve) student, faculty, and staff populations
3. Allow for sexual orientation to be controlled for (or isolated) in analysis
4. Lack of data can undermine creation of policies
5. Because sexual orientation and gender identity/expression are often combined, they can confound results or hide nuance



Challenges with Collecting Data

1. Complex Identities that are often misunderstood
2. We collect large amounts of demographic data on students/faculty/staff, but often lack institutional (and national) data on SOGIE
3. Most universities do not track pronouns, trans identity, or sexual orientation in the Student Information System or HR systems
4. Respecting privacy is a valid concern
5. We can allow people to self-identify, but ultimately may have to make decisions for/about them



Strategies to Address Challenges

1. Collect SOGIE information on admission applications
2. Identify necessary partnerships
3. Consider the degree of nuance needed in collection/analysis
4. Don't combine gender identity and sexual orientation into a single question; they are distinct identities
5. Prior to collection:
 - Consider if the information is essential/useful/actionable
 - Determine how information will be kept secure
 - Consider use of metadata



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Strategies to Address Challenges

1. Provide framing/explanatory language, to assist in answering questions
2. Provide reasons for imperfect options
3. Provide information on why the data is important/necessary and how it will be used
4. Avoid "assigned sex at birth language"
 - Unless providing healthcare
5. Provide "Prefer not to answer" option
6. Provide "Identity not listed" option, with fill-in form
7. Ensure marital status/cohabitation questions include response options are inclusive



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How are Data Being Collected?

1. Use of institutional data or creation of new questions
2. To what end are data needed? Healthcare vs. other uses
3. Collection of gender identity and appropriate pronoun(s)
4. Frequency of data collection



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Potential Sources for Data Related to LGBTQ+ Populations

1. Federal collection of LGBT data research has used proxies for LGBT identification, each of which have their inevitable shortcomings
2. Pre-existing separate sex and gender questions may allow inference of transgender people but will likely not capture entire population
3. Admissions or scholarship applications may include space to list extracurricular involvement
4. Diversity/climate surveys
5. Aggregating data from smaller surveys or data pockets around campus
6. Campus "Out List"



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Questions & Discussion

What questions do you have?

What points would you like to make?



AJ Young

Director, LGBTQ+ Center
ajyoun@iupui.edu

Robbie Janik

Associate Director, Institutional Effectiveness and Survey Research
rjanikii@iupui

Caleb J. Keith

Director, Institutional Effectiveness and Survey Research
cakeith@iupui.edu



Collecting, Analyzing, and Reporting on Data from LGBTQ+ Communities

Dr. Andrew J. Young, Robbie Janik, & Dr. Caleb J. Keith

Challenges associated with collecting data about LGBTQ+ populations

- These are complex identities; sometimes misunderstood by those who do not belong to these groups or who do not regularly work with these populations.
- While we collect large amounts of demographic data on students (and faculty/staff), we lack institutional and national data on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
- Uncommon for universities to track pronouns, trans identity, or sexual orientation in the Student Information System (SIS) or HR system.
- These identities are sometimes combined into single question, which can confound results or lose nuanced experience.

Strategies to address challenges associated with collecting data about LGBTQ+ populations

- If it is not possible to include questions related to gender identity and sexual orientation on an admissions application, consider asking these questions on a form filled out by all admitted or enrolled students.
- Avoid combining gender identity and sexual orientation into a single question; they are distinct identities.
- If needing to solicit information about gender identity, consider “How do you describe yourself?” with options, including an “identity not listed” option with an ability to write in a response.
- Questions about assigned sex are generally unnecessary, unless when in a healthcare setting. However, if required, consider “What sex were you assigned on your original birth certificate?”
- Provide a “prefer not to answer” option or avoid making questions mandatory.
- Provide framing or explanatory language to assist in answering questions. This may also be useful in explaining why imperfect responder options or categories are present (e.g. in order to have data that is comparable to U.S. census data).
- Provide information on why the requested data is important or necessary, as well as how it will be used.
- Identify necessary partnerships. Who are local experts on LGBTQ+ communities in your area?

Ethical considerations associated with the collection and use of these data

- No one should be forced to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity if they don't wish to do so.
- We want to allow people self-identify, but ultimately may have to make decisions for/about them during cleaning/analysis; how can we reduce this?
- Individually identifiable LGBTQ+ information for faculty, staff, and students should be confidential, unless consent is given (e.g. institutional OUT list).
- LGBTQ+ data should only be collected or shared for relevant use cases.
- Balance needs of individuals' rights to participation and privacy with right to be protected from discrimination or harassment.

Challenges associated with “cleaning” data about LGBTQ+ populations

- Consideration must be given to the (dis)advantages of combining identities (e.g. gender expression, sexual orientation, and trans identity).
- Open response options for LGBTQ+ identities should sometimes have been coded as a pre-selected response so may need to be recoded.
- Open-ended response will typically need to be read through individually, especially if recoding is necessary. This can be time-consuming for large datasets.
- Open-ended response coding can be subjective so need to have multiple coders to increase inter-rater reliability.

Potential methods to analyze/interpret data about LGBTQ+ populations

- Determine what is needed on your campus. Do you need counts of individuals? Do you require opinions/attitudes of varying populations?
- For your needs, does it make sense to recode sexual orientations other than heterosexual, gender non-binary, and transgender persons into one LGBTQ+ category or to leave sexual orientation and gender identity as distinct variables?
- Be careful with too much dissection since numbers will most likely be low, especially at a smaller University.

Potential sources for data related to LGBTQ+ populations

- Federal collection of LGBT data has used proxies for LGBT identification
- Pre-existing separate sex and gender questions (will likely not capture entire population)
- Admissions or scholarship applications may include space to list extracurricular involvement
- Diversity/climate surveys
- Aggregating data from smaller surveys or data pockets around campus
- Campus “Out List”

Reporting data on LGBTQ+ populations

- For qualitative data, when possible, allow for respondents to see drafts of report and provide feedback (Am I being taken out of context? Was that what I actually meant? Am I comfortable with this being included in the report?)
- Importance of reporting back to respondents in ways that they are able to understand (e.g. minimize statistical jargon)
- Include opportunities for community feedback on report/findings
- How accessible are data and reports to the community? (e.g. posted to institution website, data available in Tableau for users to self-manipulate, freely available and accessible with assistive technology)

References and Resources for Data Collection and Analysis Related to LGBTQ+ Populations

Dr. Andrew J. Young, Robbie Janik, & Dr. Caleb J. Keith

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