

1. What kinds of conversations and assessment are happening on campuses regarding gender identity and sexual orientation?
2. What are the challenges and potential solutions for asking questions about complex aspects of identity in assessment work?
 - It is difficult to find the right wording for these questions.
 - Questions about sexual orientation and gender identity tend to confuse heterosexual and/or cisgender individuals
 - Sexual orientation and gender identity questions are not standardized in any way.
 - Specifically related to gender variant populations, it is hard to distinguish sex assigned at birth versus current gender identity.
 - The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals suggests transparency in asking these questions; students should have a number of “check all that apply” options as well as a write-in for both sexual orientation and gender identity.
 - The Williams Institute suggests a multiple step method to assess gender variant status; this would include a question regarding sex assigned at birth, another about current gender identity, and potentially a third specifically regarding transgender status.

Figure 1. How NSSE asks about gender identity and sexual orientation:

What is your gender identity?

- Man
- Woman
- Another gender identity, please specify:
- I prefer not to respond

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual
 - Gay
 - Lesbian
 - Bisexual
 - Another sexual orientation, please specify:
 - Questioning or unsure
 - I prefer not to respond
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3. What are some challenges and solutions for surveying, disseminating results, and talking about difficult or sensitive topics?

- Gender variant and LGBTQ students are smaller populations, so there is a risk of “outing” or tokenizing these students.
- It might be difficult to locate gender variant and LGBTQ students, making response rates low.
- We may not know the true size of the population of gender variant and LGBTQ students, making it difficult to know true response rates.
- Analysis of smaller populations may add to their marginalization. These students are often clumped together in order to achieve higher numbers, which can mask their experience.
- At the same time, we should not simply leave them out of our analysis, because of their small numbers. Given the history of negative campus climate for these students, it is important to assess and report their stories.

4. How do results about engagement, campus support, and satisfaction differ for students by gender identity and sexual orientation?

- Data: 2014-2015 National Survey of Student Engagement; 1041 institutions; 660,377 first-year and senior students
- Only 332 institutions (239,740 students, 36%) opted to ask the question about students’ sexual orientation

Table 1. Select Average Scores for Engagement, Support, and Satisfaction for Gender Variant and GLBQ Students by Option for Sexual Orientation Status

		Average score at institutions that ask the sexual orientation question	Average score at institutions that DO NOT ask the sexual orientation question	Differences
Higher-Order Learning	Gender variant	39.72	37.77	d=.13**
	GLBQ	40.52	?.??	
Reflective & Integrative Learning	Gender variant	42.14	40.12	d=.14**
	GLBQ	40.76	?.??	
Discussions with Diverse Others	Gender variant	44.00	41.72	d=.15**
	GLBQ	43.24	?.??	
Student-Faculty Interaction	Gender variant	24.81	22.69	d=.13**
	GLBQ	23.63	?.??	
Supportive Environment	Gender variant	33.40	30.71	d=.19***
	GLBQ	34.49	?.??	
Satisfaction	Gender variant	3.05	2.96	d=.11*
	GLBQ	3.16	?.??	

Note: Engagement and Support measures are on a 0-60 point scale, Satisfaction is on a 1-4 point scale.

* $p < .05$, $p < .01$, $p < .001$. With NSSE data, effect sizes greater than .1 are considered to be small but notable.

References:

- Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals (2015). “Suggested Best Practices for Asking Sexual Orientation and Gender on College Applications”
- Tate, C. C., Ledbetter, J. N., & Youssef, C. P. (2013). A two-question method for assessing gender categories in the social and medical sciences. *Journal of Sex Research*, 50(8), 767-776.